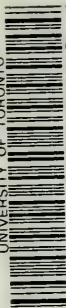


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THE JORDAN

AND

THE DEAD SEA.



THE JORDAN
AND
THE DEAD SEA.

“ The whole land shall be desolate ;
Yet will I not make a full end.” JER. iv. 27

“ The time of rest, the promised sabbath, comes.”
COWPER.

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P R E F A C E.

THE object of the following work is to give a succinct and interesting account of the great Valley of the Jordan, with its waters and neighbouring mountains, by bringing together the principal results of modern travel and recent investigations, which, in several parts of the locality in view, have been so rich in their fruits, as to render previous information almost obsolete. It would be superfluous to name all the authors who have been consulted in writing this volume, but the following modern authorities have been chiefly referred to. In examining the sources of the Jordan, we have followed almost exclusively the Rev. W. M. Thomson, American missionary, whose article on the subject, in the *American Bibliotheca Sacra*, contains the best and most intelligible account which has yet appeared of that interesting district.

In passing through the Ghor, from the Lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, we have been dependent on lieutenant Lynch, of the American navy. The hitherto unnavigated waters of the Jordan have been placed before us in an altogether new and singular light by American enterprise.

In regard to the Dead Sea, our obligations are nearly equal to lieutenant Lynch, and his more learned and honoured countryman, Dr. Robinson. To the latter of these gentlemen must still be awarded the praise of having done more than any other to throw light on the scenes of Scripture History.

The volume is likewise much indebted to the invaluable labours of our countrymen, Wilson, Kitto, and others. It will be found, it is hoped, to contain the most recent and important contributions to a correct knowledge of a region, in which Christians can never cease to feel a deep and lively interest.

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THE JORDAN AND THE DEAD SEA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.—THE JORDAN VALLEY.

True principle of interest in scenery—Continuous valley—Mountain chains—The Lîtâny—Fertility of Palestine—Its extensive interest.

WE have outgrown the rudeness which would estimate the importance and interest of things by their bulk. We no longer judge a man by the number of cubits in his stature. Saul of Gibeah was "from his shoulders and upward higher than any of the people." Saul of Tarsus "in bodily presence" was "weak." But we account the latter incomparably the greater of the two. So is it with countries. The judgment of Cicero, who inferred the littleness of the Hebrews' God from the smallness of the territory which He had given his worshippers, excites only the smile of a Christian child. The interest which attaches to square miles is almost nothing apart from the feet which tread them. The glory of a land does not consist in the number of its acres, but in the deeds

which are associated with its name. The dreary and interminable steppes of mountain table-lands possess less of interest than a single pass of Thermopylæ. The silent and boundless solitudes of an American llano and of an African desert, sublime in their solitude and vastness, awaken less sentiment, and are less stimulating to thought and emotion, than the narrow bounds of ancient Greece, every vale, and hill, and plain, and bay of which is associated with human action and human genius.

The application of this principle to the subject of this volume is obvious. The hill of a thousand feet may be more glorious than that whose height is measured by twenty thousands; and the river which flows only sixty miles, may have been the scene of greater wonders than that which traverses its thousands. To us, the Andes and the Himalayah are less interesting than Mount Lebanon; and the Mississippi and the Amazons give place to the Jordan.

If the reader will place before him a map of Palestine and Arabia, he will be able to trace in ascent from south to north a continuous chain of valleys, lakes, and rivers, from the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea to Antioch in the north of Syria. There is first the Valley of Arabah, (Wady El-Arabah,) extending from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea. There is then the Dead Sea itself, where stood the cities of the plain; and from the Dead Sea to the Lake of Tiberias there is the great Ghor or valley

through which the Jordan flows. The Lake of Tiberias, the Jordan again, the Lake El-Huleh, and the river Hasbany, conduct us into the Hollow Syria, (Cœlo-Syria,) which lies between the two Lebanons—Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. This great valley, at its one extremity an arid wilderness, at its other extremity a very garden of beauty and fertility, and throughout its centre and larger portion occupied by waters of great natural and historic interest, is evidently one in its general geological character. "Obviously of volcanic origin, it is a lengthened hollow, produced by the sinking of its bed in the uprearing of the ranges of hills which form its lofty sides. Springing from the heights of Lebanon, it runs southward in a deepening depression, till at last it sinks in the bottom of the Dead Sea, to the extraordinary depth of three thousand and twenty-nine feet below the level of the Mediterranean;"* or, rather, it lengthens itself onward to the Arabian Gulf.

On either side of this long depression there stands a chain of mountains, originating in Mount Taurus, in Asia Minor, and extending, though with frequent variations and intermissions, through the high midlands of Palestine on the west, and the line of Trans-Jordanic table-lands on the east, till "they rise into the lofty summits that are grouped together in the apex of the peninsula of Sinai," on the one hand, and are lost in the deserts of Arabia on

* Scripture Illustrated from Recent Discoveries, p. 7.

the other. The predominant geological formation in the northern and larger half of these ranges is limestone, disposed in strata variously inclined, and, like nearly all limestone strata, containing a great number of caverns to which, as we shall find, frequent allusion is made in the Scriptures. The high, and desolate, and most memorable peaks of Sinai, are composed of various kinds of granite.

It is an interesting fact, that from this extended valley one, and only one, solitary stream finds its way through the intervening mountains to the Mediterranean. It is the Lîtâny. "Rising near Báalbek, at an elevation above the sea of about four thousand feet, it creeps sluggishly through the Bŭkâa, (Cœlo-Syria,) until, after a thousand serpentine meanderings and doublings upon its track, it reaches the south-west extremity of the plain. There it immediately engages in a difficult contest with the everlasting pillars of Lebanon for a free passage down to the Mediterranean. In the struggle, a deep crevice is effected through the solid strata of the mountain, down which the torrent launches its whole force with headlong fury. So narrow is the rent, that only here and there is room found along the stream for a footpath, and the high and perpendicular cliffs approach so near, and frown so darkly in many places, that a bird will scarcely venture to fly between them. Near the Jisr Bŭrghŭr, the branches of the trees from either side meet and interlock, forming

a verdant canopy, which entirely screens the current below from the noonday sun. Every few hundred rods the stream appears to rush directly against a perpendicular cliff of great height, thrown across the channel, as if on purpose to bar all further progress; but, wheeling sharply to the right or left, it leaps furiously down its rocky road, until again brought up as suddenly by some other cliff, when it finds or forces a passage in quite another direction. Thus it struggles with opposing mountains for many miles, in a course not far from southwest. Having passed Kūlāt esh-Shûkîf, it turns due west, and in about five hours* (fifteen miles) falls into the sea a few miles north of Tyre.

“This deep rent in the mountain range is without an example. . . . No other fountain or river breaks over this western wall.” With this exception, the fountains and rivers turn towards the Jordan, and are finally “lost in the bitter waters of the Dead Sea, swallowed up by the sands of the Desert, or fall into the Gulf of Akabah—the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea. The fact is singular, and not to have been expected, considering the structure of the plains and mountains; and it is not improbable that the geology of the region, carefully studied, will point to a period when this, like every other stream which rises within the long valley, flowed south, and either swelled the dimensions of the Dead Sea, or was carried, with

* An hour, in the eastern mode of reckoning distance, means from two and a half to three geographical miles.

all the rest, onward to the Gulf of Akabah. There is reason to believe that the valley of Būkâa [the entire Cœlo-Syria] was, at some remote period, a large lake. This is not the place for the discussion of such a question, but the proofs appear sufficient. And the same convulsion which depressed so greatly the valley of the Dead Sea, may have rent open this new outlet for the streams of the Būkâa, by which the lake was entirely drained, and its waters carried into the Mediterranean instead of the Dead Sea. The idea is a little exciting, but not improbable. Even now the river from Báalbek seems as if it could be carried into the Hasbany without difficulty, and thus fill up the Huleh and the Lake Tiberias, augment the Jordan, and enlarge the Dead Sea. This hypothesis presents a beautiful chain of lakes and rivers stretching from Cœlo-Syria to the Red Sea, and opening a magnificent channel of internal commerce and communication."*

The natural resources of the Valley of the Jordan and of Palestine are not to be judged by the present desolation of the country. Competent witnesses do not hesitate to say, that it is capable of a cultivation which would entirely justify the encomium upon it, as a land flowing with milk and honey. The testimony of professor Schubert, both exact and scientific, is worthy of the fullest confidence. He says: "The ridge of chalk mountains, chiefly those

* Sources of the Jordan: by the Rev. W. M. Thomson. American Bibliotheca Sacra, Feb., 1846, p. 205.

containing marl, is in most places so irrigated by water, and so acted upon by the sun, as to be remarkable for the luxuriant growth of the great variety of plants with which they are adorned. The basalt mountains give birth to numerous springs. No soil could be naturally more fruitful and fit for cultivation than that of Palestine. . . . I cannot comprehend how, not only scoffers like Voltaire, but early travellers, who doubtless intended to declare the truth, represent Palestine as a natural desert, whose soil never could have been fit for profitable cultivation. Whoever saw the exhaustless abundance of plants on Carmel and the border of the desert, the grassy carpet of Esdraelon, the lawns adjoining the Jordan, and the rich foliage of the forests of Mount Tabor—whoever saw the borders of the lakes of Merom and Gennesareth, wanting only the cultivator to intrust to the soil his seed and plants, may state what other country on earth, devastated by two thousand years of warfare and spoliation, could be more fit for being again taken into cultivation. The bountiful hand of the Most High, which formerly showered abundance upon this renowned land, continues to be still open to those desirous of his blessings.”

This land, which was honoured as the scene where those truths were revealed, which are reclaiming and civilizing the world, small and insignificant as it is, is a field of boundless interest. We shall now pass through its great valley, and follow the course of the waters of the Jordan.

CHAPTER II.

THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN.

Mount Hermon—Banias—Its cave and temple—Lake Phiala—
Tell-el-Kâdy—The Hasbany—The Druses.

WE now begin our travels in search of the fountains of the Jordan.* If we suppose ourselves standing at the northern extremity of the waters of Merom, the Lake El-Huleh, there will seem little difficulty in the way of accomplishing our object—no such difficulty as interposes between the traveller and the fountains of the Nile or the Niger. Pestilence, the wild beast, and wilder man, all there interpose their tremendous power to repel the adventurous as well as the timid. Here we seem at home, amid the most ancient scenes of historical

* “The present Arabic name for the Jordan is Esh-Sherfâh, ‘the watering place,’ to which the epithet El-Kebîr, ‘the great,’ is sometimes annexed. The form El-Urdun, however, is not unknown among Arabian writers. The common name of the great valley, through which it flows below the Lake of Tiberias, is El-Ghor, signifying a depressed tract, or plain, usually between two mountains; and the same name continues to be applied to the valley quite across the whole length of the Dead Sea, and for some distance beyond,” although more commonly appropriated to the valley between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea.

interest, where miles are to be counted by units or tens, every foot of which seems to be described in ancient documents, inspired and uninspired—the abode of civilization from time immemorial. It is true, protection is needful from those wanderers whose “hands have been against every man,” from the days of their progenitor Ishmael. But the only real difficulty is this, that the facts of physical geography do not agree with the nomenclature of civil geography. If we follow nature, and trace the river to its remotest and most abundant source, we shall find it at one place; if we follow names and arbitrary designations, we shall find that source at another spot. Happily we are now* in a position to do justice to both, and the home traveller may realize, without much trouble, those scenes of undying interest to which we invite his attention.

Before leaving the Lake El-Huleh, we may look towards the country into which we are going. The most prominent object before us is a lofty mountain, towering above the ridge of Anti-Lebanon. It is the snowy summit of the Jebel es-Sheikh—the chief’s, or old man’s mountain—a name which it has probably obtained from its fancied resemblance to the hoary head and beard of a venerable sheikh. It rivals Mont Blanc, though, from the elevation of the

* We refer to the invaluable article on the “Sources of the Jordan,” in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for February, 1846. It is distinct, graphic, and learned, and we shall avail ourselves largely of its aid. The quotations in this chapter, which are not otherwise distinguished, are from this paper.

ground on which it stands, it is less imposing than that "king of European mountains." This is no other than the ancient Hermon. It is the loftiest and most beautiful of the mountains of Syria and Palestine, rising like a majestic pyramid, not, indeed, covered with eternal snows, but with ravines of ice around its summit, "which reflect the beams of the summer's sun, and thus form for it a glittering crown." Hermon is visible far down the Jordan Valley, even from Nebo, where Moses stood, over against Jericho, a distance of about one hundred miles. The hoary aspect of Hermon would suggest a reason for the name of the great mountain formation to which it belongs, were we not aware of another. As seen from Beirût, on the Mediterranean, the mighty wall of western Lebanon rises in indescribable majesty to the height of nine or ten thousand feet, impending over the city. "As its ridges here present themselves to the eye, one is immediately struck with the reason and the propriety of the name Lebanon, signifying in Hebrew the White Mountain, for the whole mass of the mountain consists of whitish limestone; or, at least, the rocky surface, as it reflects the light, exhibits everywhere a whitish aspect."

The majesty of Hermon, the most magnificent uprising of the eastern or Anti-Lebanon, gave ornament and beauty to the poetry of the Hebrew bards. And it is now no less true to its vocation, as a majestic witness to the good-

ness and power of God, than when the ancient psalmist sang, "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name."

To add to the interest with which we regard Mount Hermon, it is under its shadow and on its flanks that we find the fountains and sources of the Jordan. The first and most eastern of them is BANIAS. From El-Huleh, a few hours' travelling will bring us to it. This is the ancient Paneas, which was enlarged and beautified by Philip the Tetrarch, who called it Cæsarea, in honour of Tiberius the emperor, and added the cognomen of Philippi, to distinguish it from Cæsarea of Palestine. In "the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi," one of the noblest confessions of faith ever uttered was addressed by Peter to his Master, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And in "the towns," or villages, rather, "of Cæsarea Philippi," the "Lord of life" taught the people his Divine and heavenly doctrine, and initiated his disciples into the mystery of his sufferings and death, revealing the glorious truth, that the Son of man would die for sinners, to make atonement and reconciliation; so that whosoever should believe in him might not perish, but have eternal life.

Banias, being only four miles distant from Laish, which was captured from the Sidonians by the Danites, and by them called Dan, is often confounded with Laish, the modern El-Kâdy, or El-Kadhi. It is probable, that at one time the suburbs of the two places so

approximated to each other, as almost to constitute them one. Dr. Wilson's guide, on occasion of his visit to Banias, told him that Nimrod dwelt there, and was accustomed to throw stones against Abraham dwelling at the Tell El-Kadhi.

The vegetation around Banias is very luxuriant, and the district, "the region or coasts of Cæsarea Philippi," possesses all "the verdure and fragrance of a little Eden." "The city itself is securely embosomed among mountains, which stand around it on the north-west, north, east, and south. The platform or terrace upon which it is built may be elevated about one hundred feet above the plain. That part of the city which was within the ancient walls lay directly south of the fountain. The stream formed a deep channel along the northern and western walls, and a part of the water was formerly carried into the ditch which protected the eastern wall, and fell into the deep ravine of the mountain torrent, Wady El-Kid, on the margin of which the southern wall was constructed. Thus the city was surrounded by water, and defended on all sides by natural ravines, except on the east, which was secured by a deep and wide fosse. The whole area is small, not being much more than a mile in circumference. The north-west corner is now occupied by about fifty wretched hovels, constituting the entire modern representatives of this great city. The western half is overgrown with luxuriant briars and thorns, which

cover up and quite conceal two or three flour-mills."

"The suburbs appear to have been far more extensive than the city itself. The plain towards the north-west, west, and south-west, is covered with columns, capitals, and foundations, bearing indubitable testimony to the ancient size and magnificence of Banias. And should Syria ever again become a flourishing country, this place would speedily rise into a large and important city. Its many natural advantages would secure this result. A more retired, protected, and charming spot for a city could scarcely be found. The public lounge of Banias is under a terebinth tree, whose branches cast a shadow seventy-five paces in circumference. Other trees are large in proportion; and almost every production of the earth might be brought to great perfection. Extensive fields of maize present a beautiful prospect. The wild boars feed luxuriously upon the green corn, and the farmers are obliged to watch their fields by night. This is rather dangerous sport, but they manage to kill a great many of them. Ounces, wolves, and gazelles, are also very numerous in the thickly wooded plain before the town."

The fountain of the Jordan is, of course, the point of greatest interest at Banias. The most ancient notice of it is from the pen of Josephus. When speaking of Herod the Great, he writes thus: "So when he (Herod) had conducted Cæsar (Augustus) to the sea, and was returned

home, he built him a most beautiful temple of the whitest stone in Zendorus' country, near the place called Panium. This is a very fine cave in a mountain, under which there is a great cavity in the earth, and the cavern is abrupt, and prodigiously deep, and full of water ; over it hangs a vast mountain ; and under the cavern arise the springs of the Jordan. Herod adorned this place, which was already a very remarkable one, still further, by the erection of this temple, which he dedicated to Cæsar."

Let us first examine the fountain, and then return to the temple.

" The present cave and fountain differ widely from this description of the Jewish historian. A few rods north of the town there runs a perpendicular cliff, forty or fifty feet high, parallel to the old wall of the city. Not far from the middle of this cliff there is a high irregularly shaped cave, which, however, at present penetrates the mountain only a few feet. Out of this cave Josephus says the river issues, and this is indeed the uniform testimony, both ancient and modern. The fact is, however, that the fountain bursts out [now] amongst loose stones and rocks, several rods distant, and some twenty feet below the mouth of the cave. . . . Probably the ruins of Herod's temple, and other ancient buildings, have entirely choked up the entrance of the cave ; and if the vast mass of rocks and rubbish, through which the water now bursts out, were removed, we should find the cavern abrupt and

prodigiously deep, and full of still water ; and probably it might be found arched over, in order to form the floor of the temple. Perhaps upon this arch are heaped together the broken rocks which now cover the bottom of the cave."

Josephus has some other statements which are worthy of notice : " Now Panium is thought to be the fountain of the Jordan, but in reality it is carried thither after an occult manner from the place called Phiala. This place lies as you go to Trachonitis, and is one hundred and twenty furlongs from Cæsarea, and is not far from the road on the right hand. And, indeed, it has its name Phiala [bowl] very justly, from the roundness of its circumference, as being round like a wheel. Its water continues always up to its edges, without either sinking or running over. And as this origin of Jordan was formerly not known, it was discovered so to be, when Philip was tetrarch of Trachonitis, for he had chaff thrown into Phiala, and it was found at Panium, where the ancients thought the fountain head of the river was, whither it had been therefore carried."

That so small a reservoir should supply such a magnificent fountain, and yet be subject to no fluctuations itself, is nearly incredible. But what and where is this Phiala? This question is now set at rest by Mr. Thomson. The ancient Phiala is the *Birket-er-Ram*, seen by Irby and Mangles. It is three hours (nine miles) east from the fountain of Banias. " The

Birket," says Mr. Thomson, "is the most singular basin of water I have ever examined. It is manifestly the mouth of a perfectly round crater, filled with water to within about eighty feet of the top. This great volcanic bowl is about three miles in circumference, and the sides are so steep, that it is difficult to get down to the water. It does not appear to be very deep, since, in most parts, the surface is covered with weeds, upon which thousands of ducks were feeding. The circumstances which identify the Birket-er-Ram with the ancient Phiala are its bowl-like shape, and the fact that it has neither inlet nor outlet, is fed neither by a running stream nor by any visible fountain, and has no known channel of escape for its surplus waters. It neither increases nor diminishes; but what it is now, in this hottest and driest season of the year, the line on its lava-built margin clearly proves it to be during the rains and snows of winter. This is a singular fact, and I leave others to explain the curious phenomenon."

But is there really any connexion between the Birket-er-Ram and the fountain at Banias? It seems impossible. "The water of the Phiala is so insipid and nauseous that it cannot be drunk, while the fountain at Banias pours out a river of cool, sweet, and delicious water. The Phiala is so crowded with leeches, that a man can gather six thousand or even eight thousand of them in a day, while the fountain at Banias is not infested by a single leech.

This could not be if the river of Banias drained the Lake Phiala. Besides, the size and position of the mountains, and the depth and direction of the intervening valleys, interpose physical and geological obstacles which render the supposition incredible. And, moreover, so vast a discharge of water as the fountain of Banias requires, would draw off the whole Lake of Phiala in twenty-four hours ; or, if the supply from some hidden source be equal to the demand, it would at least change the stagnant character of the lake, and manifest its appearance on the surface."

It was rather singular that Mr. Thomson's guide should volunteer the following piece of information : " He said, that five hours up the mountain towards the snows of Jebel-es-Sheikh, at a place called Shebâ, there was a cave through which the stream of Banias flowed. Upon asking him how they knew that it was the same, he replied, that they threw in *tibn* (chaff) at the cave, and it came out at Banias." This, it will be remembered, is the experiment ascribed by Josephus to Philip the Tetrarch. But, though the Arab's version of the story seemed at first sight the more probable of the two, our investigator became equally satisfied that there could be no connexion between the fountain at Shebâ and the fountain at Banias. There doubtless are, however, inexhaustible reservoirs in the Jebel-es-Sheikh, which supply all the great fountains that burst out around its base, and which, united, constitute the Jordan.

And "it is still possible that the stream of Banias, in its descent from the snows of Hermon, may appear on the surface, and subsequently disappear under the mountain. The idea is familiar to the people of the country, and many absurd stories of such phenomena are in circulation and believed."

A few words now on the temple said to have been built by Herod the Great at the fountain of Paneas. The circumstance is curious, but characteristic. An Idumæan by birth, and, therefore, not "of Israel," the king of the Jews appears before us as a spiritual Samaritan. He combines the worship of Jehovah with the worship of the gods of the land, or time, with which he has present connexion. In Jerusalem he restores, and almost rebuilds, the temple of the God of Israel, at a cost and with a munificence worthy of Solomon. At Paneas, he erects a temple in honour of Cæsar Augustus. This is the spirit of genuine idolatry, which has no objection to place the name of Jehovah beside that of Jove and Baal, but resents the claim of exclusive homage to the one true God.

To the east of the cave at Banias, the rock has been cut into niches to contain statues, and smoothly polished to receive inscriptions. One of the inscriptions, though partially defaced, is interesting, as it corroborates the testimony of Josephus, that Agrippa adorned Banias with royal liberality. The others confirm the uniform testimony of antiquity, that this fountain was held sacred to Pan.

TELL-EL-KÂDY, (Laish or Dan.)*—The second principal fountain of the Jordan, that from which issues the stream which Josephus calls the Lesser Jordan, is at a small hill, variously estimated as from three to four miles due west from Banias. Most of the intervening plain is densely covered with oaks and other trees, having a thick undergrowth of various kinds of bushes. "The tell, or hill, is oblong," says lieutenant Lynch,† "with swelling sides and a flattened summit, about eighty feet above the plain. Over the crest is a hollow, where the fountain bubbles up. The whole hill bore traces of volcanic character. On the west side, a short distance from the fountain, a stream, or rather many streams, gushed out so copiously from the hill side, as in an instant to form a river, the water clear, cool, and sweet." "The tell, or hill, (according to the more exact and scientific description of Thomson,) is elevated about forty or fifty feet, and its figure is circular, or rather oval, being longest from east to west. One part of it is covered with oak trees, and another part with thick brushwood and briars. It is evidently an extinct crater, about half a mile in circumference. On the southwestern side, the wall of this crater has been

* The account of the occupation of Laish by the tribe of Dan is recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Judges. The description given of the district of Laish by the "five men" of Dan, is fully confirmed by the observations of modern travellers.

† Narrative of the United States' Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea. By W. F. Lynch. This valuable work has been largely used in the present compilation.

partly carried away by the action of the great fountain, which gushes out all at once a beautiful river, of delicious water, several times larger than the stream at Banias. The fountain, in reality, first appears in the centre of the crater. The great body of the water, however, glides underneath the lava boulders, and rushes out at the bottom of the Tell on the west. But a considerable stream rises to the surface within the crater, and is conducted over its south-western margin, and drives a couple of flour mills, which are overshadowed by some magnificent oak trees, and almost buried beneath the luxuriant vegetation of the place. The two streams (from the hill, or crater) unite below the mills, forming a river forty or fifty feet wide, which rushes very rapidly down into the marsh of the Huleh. There were a multitude of turtles sunning themselves on the rocks around." The streams from Banias and the Tell-el-Kâdy unite about three miles to the south-west, in their course to the Huleh, the point of junction being within the marsh.

There is no accounting for the superiority given by Josephus to the former of these streams, except it be that the size and renown of the city Paneas, and the splendid decorations of its fountain, may have led popular usage to regard that stream as the more important. We shall soon find another stream, whose claims, on natural grounds, to be considered the Jordan, rather than the two just described, are indisputable. But the Jews took no notice

of it. "Such anomalies in popular nomenclature arise," says Dr. Robinson, "sometimes, perhaps, from ignorance of the country, and of the relative length of streams. In other cases, the reason is less obvious. . . . As to the two streams in question, the one from Banias, and the Hasbany, may not the natural prejudice of the Jews have had some influence? The Jordan was their only river—the national and sacred stream. May they not, therefore, have felt an interest in making it wholly their own, and have thus chosen to find its sources at Banias, within their own borders, rather than in the Hasbany, which comes from without their territory?"

THE HASBANY.—We now bend our course northward into the valley of the Hollow Syria, where, at four hours, or twelve miles distance from Tell-el-Kâdy, is the town of Hasbeiya, on the western flank of one of the ridges of Anti-Lebanon. Half an hour further, nearly northwest from the town, the fountain of Hasbany boils up from the bottom of a shallow pool, some eight or ten rods in circumference. The water is immediately turned by a strong stone dam into a wide mill-race. This is, undoubtedly the most distant fountain, and the true source of the Jordan. "It at once, even in this dry season, (September,) forms a considerable stream. It meanders for the first three miles through a narrow, but very lovely and highly cultivated valley. Its margin is protected and adorned with the green fringe and

dense shade of the sycamore, button, and willow trees, while innumerable fish sport in its cool and crystal bosom. It then sinks rapidly down a constantly deepening gorge of dark basalt for about six miles, when it reaches the level of the great volcanic plain, extending to the marsh above the Huleh. Thus far the direction is nearly south ; but it now bears a little westward, and in eight or ten miles falls into the marsh, about midway between the eastern and western mountains. Pursuing a southern direction through the middle of the marsh for about ten miles, it enters the Lake Huleh not far from its north-west corner, having been immensely enlarged by the waters from the great fountains of Banias, Tell-el-Kâdy, El Mellalah, Derakit or Belat, and innumerable other springs. The distance from the fountain Hasbany to the lake cannot be less than twenty-five miles, and nearly in a straight direction." During the rainy season, a great volume of water rushes down from the heights of Jebel-es-Sheikh above Rasheiya, a distance of twenty miles, and unites with the waters of this fountain.

A few miles from the fountain of the Hasbany there are bitumen wells. "Nothing on the surface indicates the presence of such a mineral. The wells are dug in the side of a smooth and gently declining hill, of soft chalky rock or indurated marl, abounding in nodules of flint. A shaft is sunk about fifty feet deep, to the bed or stratum of bitumen, which appears to lie hori-

zontally, and is wrought like coal mines." But the present government of that unhappy land operates like a blight on all industry and enterprise, and these wells are no longer worked. At some future day of better things to Syria, the bitumen may become an important article of commerce.

Before we "leave the snows of Lebanon," and the land of "cold-flowing waters," the region of "a thousand rills," for the marshes of the Huleh, we should form some acquaintance with the tribes around us. We are in the neighbourhood of the Druses, whose recent relations to the Maronites, and to their governments, have been full of tragedy. But their history is too intricate to be unravelled, and too long to be told in a few sentences.* They are an offshoot from Mohammedanism. Their books and dogmas are kept by them a profound secret, and it is only casualty and the occurrences of war that have unsealed them to the eyes of European scholars. One of the seven great precepts of their religion requires them to renounce all other religions and worship; but it is a maxim with them to profess the creed of the strongest. "Why do you deny all books but the Kurán to those who ask you?" is one of the questions in their Catechism.† And the answer is, "Necessity requires us to lean on the religion of the Moslems, and, there-

* See an able article on the Druses of Mount Lebanon, by Dr. Robinson, in the *Bib. Sacra* for May, 1843.

† This Catechism is given at length in Dr. Wilson's *Lands of the Bible*, vol. i., 715—721.

fore, we must confess the book of Mohammed. Nor is this compliance in any respect sinful ; nor do we follow the Moslems in the matter of prayers over the dead for any other reason than because we are dependent, and that true religion requires us to comply with the prevailing authority." Accordingly, the Druses, when they mix with Mohammedans, perform the rites of Islamism. But, in private, they break the fast of Ramadan, curse Mohammed, indulge in wine, and eat food forbidden by the Kurán—another proof that falsehood and false religions have no power to purify or elevate their devotees.

As a race, the Druses are hardy and industrious. The manner in which some of their water-courses for irrigation are constructed, does great credit to their industry and sagacity. There are streams flowing many miles along the sides of the hills, which have been conducted through mountains perforated for their passage, carried over wide valleys with admirable aqueducts, and which irrigate large tracts of land in their progress. The Druses are high-spirited and brave, even to rashness. Niebuhr relates an instance, where a sheikh, with two or three hundred men, made a mad-cap expedition to the city of Damascus, and actually plundered the bazaar in open day, and escaped in safety. A Druse sheikh would become an object of contempt were tears to be once seen in his eyes.

CHAPTER III.

THE WATERS OF MEROM.

Historical associations—The plain from Banias to the castle of Hunin—The marsh and lake—Obstacles to improvement—The long plain—Jacob's bridge—Bethsaida Julias—Safed—Jewish heathenism—House-tops—Destructive earthquake.

IN the neighbourhood of the waters of Merom,* were fought of old two famous battles. The northern kings of Canaan confederated to resist the further progress of the successful arms of Joshua. "And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many." But they were defeated, and pursued in their rout as far as "unto Great Zidon." Nearly a century and a half after this defeat, the Canaanites of the north had recovered the ascendancy. A new Jabin, reigning like his predecessor in Hazor, by the Lake Merom, rose into great power. With a force of not fewer than nine hundred iron-armed chariots, he was enabled, for the punishment of their sins, to reduce the northern tribes of Israel to

* Called by Josephus the Lake Samochonitis, and now called El-Huleh.

subjection, and to hold them tributary. The condition to which Israel was brought was miserable in the extreme. Their villages and open homesteads, as we gather from the song of Deborah, which were continually liable to be pillaged, were deserted, and the people found it necessary to congregate in the walled towns. At their watering-places they were waylaid and robbed, wounded or slain; and travellers were compelled to journey in by-roads and unfrequented paths. This oppression the Israelites endured for twenty years.

We must now visit the lake, turning to the south from Banias, where is the most celebrated fountain of the Jordan. For a few miles the country seems like "a well-watered garden," studded with fountains, and irrigated by natural rills, which all find their way ultimately to the Jordan. It is "a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth." Beyond it there are appearances of an extensive marsh, before the waters of the Huleh come in sight. The marsh is described as perfectly level, and covered with flags, and reeds, and rushes. Flocks almost innumerable, of white sheep and black goats, each with its shepherd before and dogs behind, are seen from early dawn till evening, sauntering lazily along its eastern, northern, and western shores. Drove of camels, and herds of cows and buffaloes, also enliven every part of the plain; whilst low ranges of tents, here and there, stretch their black curtains along the reedy

marsh, and associate what is every-day and common-place, with the ancient and the patriarchal. On the northern part of the marsh, the Arabs pasture their cattle during the dry season. But a very little way on it becomes an impassable swamp. A recent traveller asked an Arab if he could reach the lake through the marsh. The Bedouin gazed in the face of the Frank for a moment, to see if he were in earnest, and then, lifting his hand, swore that not even a wild boar could get through.

Not attempting this impracticable route, but turning westward, in an hour we reach the Tell-el-Kâdy, already described. At this point the marsh is nearer to us than at Banias. We still pursue a westward course, and in little more than two hours reach the castle of Hunin. We have travelled ten miles over a plain, and are now at its western boundary, the southward extension of Lebanon. The castle of Hunin is a large and ancient fortress, and stands out in bold relief to the eyes of all who traverse the eastern and southern plain. Some regard it as the site of the ancient Hazor, though there is reason to believe that that "head of all the kingdoms round about" was further south. Proceeding southward, in the line of the ridge on which Hunin stands, but on the plain below, for ten miles we have the marsh on our left. For seven miles further, the lake occupies the same position, and except at its northern extremity, where the marsh and

lake blend and intermingle, the "waters of Merom" are as well defined as any other lake. In some places its shore is muddy, but in others it is abrupt and stony. The water is clear and sweet, and various kinds of water-fowl sport on its bosom. Its greatest breadth is six miles. This is at its northern extremity, from which it tapers toward the south.

Taken together, the marsh and lake cover as large, if not a larger area than the Lake of Tiberias. The whole was, probably, at one time covered with water, and the northern part has been gradually filled by the detritus from the mountains and elevated plains. Even now, in the rainy season, it must be mostly submerged. "There was a second shore a few rods from the edge of the lake, where we saw it, (says Thomson,) up to which the water evidently extends during the wet months, and the lake thus swollen would cover much of the marsh. Several years ago, a company of men in Hasbeiya obtained permission from Ibrahim Pacha to remove some rocks which choked up the outlet of the lake, by which means a large tract of most fertile land was laid dry, and luxuriant crops were gathered from it for two or three years, until a fresh fall of rocks again filled up the channel, and restored the lake to its former dimensions. I have been assured by one of the persons engaged in that enterprise, that the whole lake and marsh might be drained without difficulty, and at a moderate expense."

But the government is not the only barrier in the way of improvement and progress. The people are as well. The traveller to whom we are indebted for the most satisfactory account of this region, reached the edge of the lake at a small encampment of Arabs, and took lunch under one of their tents. In the same tent were a number of horsemen from the desert of Haurân, a "sinister, cut-throat looking company." Having seen some sugar with the travellers, they vehemently demanded it. Each had a little, but one of them was determined to have more. On being absolutely and sternly refused, he put his hand on his sword, and demanded very roughly why they dared to come into such a place without arms—that was *Belad ed-dushman*, "the land of strife. This witness is true; 'Galilee of the nations' is very 'grievously afflicted,' and will be so till the prophecy concerning it shall receive a second and more enlarged fulfilment." "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Then

Arabia's desert ranger
 To Christ shall bow the knee;
 The Ethiopian stranger
 His glory come to see.
 Before Him on the mountains
 Shall peace the herald go,
 And righteousness in fountains
 From hill to valley flow.

We leave the waters of Merom, and turn toward the Sea of Galilee. The direct distance

is ten miles. On the right is the land of the tribe of Naphtali, a beautiful woodland country, "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord." On our left is one of the possessions of Manasseh, more anciently the northern portion of the pastoral country of Bashan. The "Long Plain" on the right, lying between the Lake Huleh and the Lake of Tiberias, is of excellent soil, "a deep black mould, formed from the debris of the basaltic rocks and dykes, which here make their appearance, running in a north and north-west direction." It is at present "partly under cultivation," Dr. Wilson says, "and partly lying waste, with a most luxuriant crop of thistles, yellow, blue, and violet. It has no villages or houses, but we observed in it several clusters of tents and reed huts." For rather more than two miles the Jordan pursues its course placidly, some say sluggishly, and we reach Jacob's Bridge, or, rather, The Bridge of Jacob's Daughters. "The bed of the river is (here) unequal in depth, varying from two to six or seven feet; but at this season of the year, June 1st," says Dr. Wilson, "we observed but little appearance of a ford, to give rise to the imagination that Jacob passed the Jordan at this place, on his way from Padan-Aram. The stream is rather rapid, and it seems plentifully stocked with fishes. It is thirty-four yards wide. Numerous reeds, rushes, canes, thorns, oleanders, and other plants, line its banks below and above the

bridge. We noticed the papyrus, which is also seen on the banks of some of the rivers running into the Mediterranean, on the western coast." Jacob's Bridge has three pointed arches—not four, as many travellers have inadvertently stated. There is a curious Arabic inscription at its centre, by which it is made to tender its own acknowledgments to Jezzar, pasha of Akka, of whose territories the Jordan formed the eastern boundary. It runs somewhat in this style: "I, this bridge, complained of the destruction of my foundation to the wazir, the butcher. He built me and increased me. . . He wishes a reward; may God increase his reward."

This structure, which, like the contiguous buildings, is principally of basaltic stone, is in the highway from Acre, on the Mediterranean, to Damascus, in the north-east. The bed of the river is low, compared with the surrounding country, but still, according to Schubert, three hundred and fifty Paris feet above the level of the sea. The banks, the average height of which may be about two hundred feet, slope irregularly down to it, leaving a small margin, which is covered with reeds and bushes.

"From Jacob's Bridge the Jordan forms a continuous waterfall," according to Von Wildenbuch, or, perhaps more properly, a succession of rapids, till very near the Lake of Tiberias, producing a very remarkable average fall of 116·9 feet per mile;* so that, although

* The windings of the river are not taken into the account in this calculation.

the Lake Huleh is 360 feet above the level of the sea, the Lake of Tiberias is 328 feet below it, according to the trigonometrical survey of lieutenant Symonds, and still more according to the barometrical observations of several travellers.

Before reaching the lake, we see one place on the left hand, and another on the right, which deserve a passing visit. On the left, the east of the river, is a spur or promontory, extending from the eastern mountains. It is known locally simply as El-Tell, "the hill," and is covered with extensive ruins. The Arabs of the valley regard it as a sort of capital, although they have lost its ancient name, and now occupy only a few houses in it as magazines. This is the site of Bethsaida of Gaulonitis, afterwards called Julias. It was originally only a village, called Bethsaida, but was rebuilt and enlarged by Philip the Tetrarch, not long after the birth of Christ, and received the name of Julias in honour of Julia, the daughter of Augustus. Philip seems to have made it his occasional residence; and here he died, and was buried in a costly tomb. It was near this Bethsaida that Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes.

The place on our right hand is a city set upon a hill; and whether tradition speaks correctly or not, when it says that the finger of our Lord was pointed to it when he said, "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid"—it is a remarkable place, and deserves our attention.

Safed stands on a high isolated hill, or peak, in the great ridge which forms the western boundary of the Valley of the Jordan, at an average distance of five or six miles from this part of the river. A very high antiquity has usually been ascribed to this place, but we have no distinct historical trace of it till the time of the Crusades.* And even in the times of the Crusades, it is not until the Christians had been in possession of the Holy Land for more than half a century, that we find any notice of Safed. But it has now for many ages been one of the holy places of the Jews, and one of the most venerated of their places of pilgrimage in Palestine. At the reputed tombs of some ancient rabbis, they hold a festival, whose ceremonies seem to be idolatrous. "Our host, Shem Thor," says Dr. Wilson, "gave us most affecting accounts of the absolutely heathen ceremonies observed by the Jews at the festival at the tombs, without at all seeing their import. He told us that the most valuable clothes are burned in the oil basins, to the names of the deceased rabbis, in fulfilment of vows made, and in anticipation of favours desired. From all that I have seen or read of traditional Rabbinism, I have no hesitation in saying, that it is as great a corruption of real Judaism as Paganism is of the patriarchal faith, and Popery of Christianity.

"As the hill on which the town is built is precipitous, and the roofs are flat, public con-

* See Robinson's Researches, vol. iii. pp. 324—333.

venience has sanctioned the conversion of these into thoroughfares, so that, both on mules and on foot, (says Elliot,) we repeatedly passed over the tops of dwellings." "The custom of drying corn and other articles on the roofs of houses here, (say Bonar and M'Cheyne,) appears to be as common as it was in the days of Rahab." There are some streets, yet remaining, where the roofs of the lower row of houses form the pathway of the row above. Before the earthquake in 1837, a camel driver suddenly observed his camel sink down. It had been walking on the roof of a house, and the roof had given way. The owner of the house was filled with alarm and anger, at seeing the animal descend into his apartment. He carried the case to the *cadi*, claiming damages for the broken roof of his house. But he was met by the camel driver claiming damages from him for the injury his camel had sustained by the fall, owing to the roof not being kept in good repair.

Not many years ago, Safed was a busy, thriving place, with a population of eight or nine thousand inhabitants. "But on the 1st of January, 1837, the new year was ushered in by the tremendous shocks of an earthquake, which rent the earth in many places, and in a few moments prostrated most of the houses, and buried thousands of the inhabitants beneath the ruins. The castle was utterly thrown down; the Mohammedan quarters standing on more level ground, and being more solidly built, were somewhat less injured; while here, as in

Tiberias, the calamity in its full weight fell with relentless fury upon the ill-fated Jews. The very manner in which their houses were erected, along the steep hill-side, exposed them to a more fearful destruction; for when the terrific shock dashed their dwellings to the ground, those above fell upon those lower down; so that, at length, the latter were covered with accumulated masses of ruins. Slight shocks continued at intervals for several weeks, serving to aggravate the scene of unspeakable dismay and distress which now prevailed here. Many were killed outright by the falling ruins; very many were ingulphed, and died a miserable death before they could be dug out; some were extricated even after five or six days, covered with wounds and bruises, only to prolong for a few hours a painful existence; while others, with broken limbs, but more tenacity of life, lived to recover. The spectacle which was presented for several weeks after the catastrophe—in every quarter the wounded, the dying, and the dead; without shelter, without attendance, without a place to lay their heads—was described by eye-witnesses as inexpressibly painful, and sometimes revolting even to loathsomeness. According to the best accounts, there perished in all not far from five thousand persons,* of whom about one thousand were Mohammedans, and the rest

* According to the information received by Dr. Wilson, three years after Dr. Robinson's visit, the number who perished was under three thousand.

chiefly Jews." "In a few more years, the traces of the earthquake will probably be no longer visible in Safed. Such is the tenure of oriental life. Earthquakes, and the desolations of wars, have again and again swept over the land, and laid waste its cities and villages; but the inhabitants cling to the soil, rebuild their towns, and live on as if nothing had happened, until, after an interval, another, and perhaps more terrible destruction, overtakes them."*

* Robinson, vol. iii., p. 321.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAKE OF TIBERIAS.*

Associations—Impressions of travellers—Dr. Clarke—Fisk—Lamartine—Dr. Robinson—Eastern shore—Gadara—Tombs—Western shore—Tell Hum—Khan Minyeh—Land of Gennesareth—Capernaum—Bethsaida—Chorazin—Magdala—Tiberias—Jewish expectations—Enthusiastic worship—Earthquake—Hot springs—Other hot springs—Southern extremity—The Mount of Beatitudes—Battle of Hattin.

FROM our landward digression to Safed, we return to the Jordan, and enter the Lake of Tiberias on the bosom of a stream, which flows with power, but not with violence. And are these, we ask, the waters on which the Son of God walked as on dry land, and on which arose those storms which confessed, by their submission, the presence of Him, the thunder of whose power who can understand? Are these, around, “the coasts” throughout whose cities and villages were proclaimed, by the lips of the Divine Preacher, the gospel of the kingdom; and these the grassy mountain sides, on which thousands were fed by the supernatural increase of a few loaves and fishes?

* Called also the Sea of Chinnereth, the Lake of Gennesareth, and the Sea of Galilee.

Do our eyes gaze on the mountains which were trodden by the feet of that mysterious Being, whom "his own" would not acknowledge, but who was no other than God "in the likeness of men?" But where are "the multitudes" that used to crowd these shores? Where are the towns and cities which lined the water edge of this sea, and studded the face of the western hills? Where are the boats and ships, whose white sails covered these waters with animation and beauty? From land and water there returns not aught of answer, but a mournful silence, which reminds us of the woes pronounced by the righteous and merciful Messiah, on the places where "most of his mighty works were done." Bethsaida, and Chorazin, and Capernaum, are not. Their very sites are questions of difficulty. Yet their former existence is attested by the present aspect of the scene. "The (western) borders of the Sea of Galilee," says Lamartine, "present as it were one continued city." Judging by the remains of walls, prostrate columns, destroyed gates, accumulated fragments, "the coasts of this sea," he says, "seem to have borne cities, instead of harvests and forests."

Let us view the scene before us from some point in those western hills, by which it is usually approached. Dr. Clarke, who had the advantage of the highest eminence, and saw from it the magnificent back-ground, bounded by Mount Hermon on the north, and the more distant mountains on the east, gives us, as we

might expect, the most glowing and unqualified description.

From the top of the (so called) Mount of Beatitudes, "a view was presented," says this traveller, "which, for its grandeur, independently of the interest excited by the different objects contained in it, has nothing equal to it in the Holy Land. From this situation, we perceived that the plain over which we had been so long riding, (from the west,) was itself very elevated. Far beneath appeared other plains, one lower than the other, in a regular gradation, reaching eastward, as far as the surface of the Sea of Tiberias. This immense lake, almost equal in the grandeur of its appearance to that of Geneva, spreads its waters over all the lower territory. Its eastern shores exhibit a sublime scene of mountains towards the north and south. . . . The cultivated plains, reaching to its borders, which we beheld at an amazing depth below our view, resembled, by the different hues their various produce presented, the motley pattern of a vast carpet. To the north appeared many snowy summits, towering beyond a series of intervening mountains." From a lower elevation, but before descending the declivity which conducts down to the shore, the same traveller writes: "The lake continued in view to our left. The wind rendered its surface rough, and called to mind the situation of our Saviour's disciples, when in one of the small vessels which traversed these waters they were tossed in a storm, and

saw Jesus, in the fourth watch of the night, walking to them upon the waves. Often as the subject has been painted, which combines a number of circumstances favourable to a sublime representation, no artist has been aware of the uncommon grandeur of the scenery memorable for the transaction. . . . It is by comparison alone, that any due conception of its appearance can be communicated to the minds of those who have not seen it. Speaking of it comparatively, it may be described as longer and finer than any of our Cumberland and Westmoreland lakes, although it be, perhaps, inferior to Loch Lomond in Scotland. It does not possess the vastness of the Lake of Geneva, although it much resembles it in certain points of view. In picturesque beauty, it perhaps comes nearest to the Lake of Locarno in Italy, although it be destitute of anything like the islands by which that majestic piece of water is adorned." To extend this comparison, perhaps the Scottish lake which gives us the best idea of the Lake of Tiberias, is Loch Tay. Loch Lomond is nearly three times the length of Tiberias, and Loch Ness about twice its length.

"As a picture," says the rev. G. Fisk, "it was surpassingly beautiful. The setting sun cast his beams upon it, shedding also a richly empurpled hue on every object. I paused, in order to get it fully imprinted on my memory; and there it is now deposited—one of the loveliest pictures in the world."

The reader will not be surprised by the

poetry of Lamartine's description, although he would be pleased to find some expressions less mystical and more distinctively evangelical. "Not one of us spoke, so intensely were our minds occupied by the scene before us, and the reflections to which it gave birth. As to myself, no spot on earth ever spoke so forcibly or so deliciously to my heart. I have always loved to wander over the physical scenes inhabited by men I have known, admired, loved, or revered, as well amongst the living as the dead. . . . But it was now no longer a great man or a great poet merely, whose favoured residence I was now visiting. It was the Man of men, the Man Divine, nature, genius, and virtue become flesh : the incarnate Divinity, whose trains I had come to adore on the very spot whereon he sojourned, on the very waves that had borne him, on the hills on which he had sate, on the stones whereon he had reposed his head. . . . The pencil of the most graceful painter would not be able to sketch outlines more vivid and picturesque than the Creator has given to these waters and these mountains. He seems to have prepared this evangelical scene for the work of grace, of peace, of reconciliation, and love. . . . This Arcadia of Judæa unites with the majesty and gravity of mountainous countries, the smiling image of fertility, and a varied abundance of productions. Ah ! if the dews of Hermon still fell upon its bosom !"

The learned investigator, Dr. Robinson, earnestly concerned to know the realities of

things, writes thus : " At half-past two o'clock, we reached the brow of the height above Tiberias, where a view of nearly the whole sea opened at once upon us. It was a moment of no little interest ; for who can look without interest upon that lake, on whose shores the Saviour lived so long, and where he performed so many of his mighty works ? Yet, to me, I must confess, so long as we continued around the lake, the attraction lay more in these associations than in the scenery itself. The lake presents, indeed, a beautiful sheet of limpid water, in a deep depressed basin, from which the shores rise, in general, steeply and continuously all around, except where a ravine, or sometimes a deep wady, occasionally interrupts them. The hills are rounded and tame, with little of the picturesque in their form ; they are decked by no shrubs nor forests ; and even the verdure of the grass and herbage, which, earlier in the season, might give them a pleasing aspect, was already gone ; they were now [in June] only naked and dreary. Whoever looks here for the magnificence of the Swiss lakes, or the softer beauty of those of England and the United States, will be disappointed. My expectations had not been of that kind ; yet, from the romantic character of the scenery around the Dead Sea, and in other parts of Palestine, I certainly had anticipated something more striking than we found around the Lake of Tiberias. One interesting object greeted our eyes—a little boat, with a white sail, gliding

over the waters, the only one, as we afterwards found, upon all the lake."* Had Dr. Robinson seen the lake from a higher point, the scenery would, doubtless, have been more magnificent and varied.

Having noticed the general views of the Sea of Galilee given by different minds, we return to its northern extremity, in order to acquaint ourselves with some interesting points in detail. The bearings of the eastern shore run nearly from north to south; and this shore, belonging to the ancient Argob, a province of Bashan, formed part of the territory which was given to the half tribe of Manasseh, which obtained possessions on the east of Jordan. It was rich in wood, in cattle, and in cities. When the children of Israel invaded the promised land, this district contained "sixty fenced cities, with walls, high gates, and brazen bars; besides unwalled towns a great many," Deut. iii. 4, 5; 1 Kings iv. 13. The oaks of Bashan rivalled the cedars of Lebanon; and "the kine of Bashan" were proverbially the best of the land. This eastern side of the Lake of Tiberias was the scene of one of our Lord's mightiest works. Going over from the western side of the lake,

* The "one boat" on the Sea of Galilee is often mentioned by travellers. But Bonar and M'Cheyne tell us of two: "While walking along the shore we saw a boat anchored close by, and on making inquiry, found that it belonged to a Jew, who had likewise another, of a smaller size, both of which were used in fishing." Eight years later, the only boat found on the lake by lieutenant Lynch was an "old frame boat," which he purchased for twenty-five dollars, but which soon went to pieces among the rocks of the Jordan.

there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were in jeopardy. And "he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water : and they ceased, and there was a calm." "And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs," Luke viii. 24, 26, 27. At the command of Him whom the winds had but shortly before obeyed, the devils went out of the man, and he was soon found sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. But the Gadarenes, instead of receiving and believing in him, besought him to depart from their coasts.

Gadara is generally recognised in the village of Om-keis, which is situated at some distance south of the extremity of the lake. The limestone, of which the hills of the district are composed, is a species of rock, in which caverns of greater or less dimensions are easily and often naturally formed. Accordingly, there were many caverns around Gadara, which were used for tombs. Buckingham speaks of several grottoes, which formed the Necropolis of the city on the eastern brow of the hill. He entered one tomb, in which were ten sepulchres, ranged along the inner wall of the chamber in a line, being pierced inward for their greatest length, and divided by a thin partition left in the rock, in each of which was cut a small

niche for a lamp. The caverns in the rocks are mentioned by Epiphanius, in terms which seem to show that they were in his day used for dwellings as well as tombs. "The accounts given of the habitation of the demoniac," says Buckingham, "here struck us very forcibly, while we ourselves were wandering among rugged mountains, and surrounded by tombs, still used as dwellings by individuals and whole families. A finer subject for a masterly expression of the passions of madness in all their violence, contrasted with the serenity of virtue and benevolence in Him who went about doing good, could hardly be chosen for the pencil of an artist; and a faithful delineation of the rugged and wild majesty of the mountain scenery here, on the one hand, with the still calm of the waters of the lake on the other, would give additional charm to the picture." One of the ancient tombs was, when this traveller saw it, used as a carpenter's shop, the occupier of it being employed in constructing a rude plough. A perfect sarcophagus remained within, which was used by the family as a provision chest. This modern occupation of sepulchral caverns as dwellings for the living is the result of desolation and poverty. But the fact beautifully illustrates the circumstance recorded in the Gospels, although the reason was different. The city itself was large, and the ruins which remain would indicate that it was a place of luxury and refinement.

We now return to the western side of the

lake, and begin our course again from the north. The general direction of the coast from the entrance of the Jordan is south-west. An hour's ride brings us to the ruins of Tell Hum, which have been regarded for centuries as the remains of Capernaum, but probably on insufficient grounds. "The ruins at Tell Hum are certainly very remarkable," says Dr. Robinson, "and it is no wonder that, in the absence of all historical or traditional account respecting them, they should have been regarded as marking the site of the ancient Capernaum. Here are the remains of a place of considerable extent, covering a tract of at least half a mile in length along the shore, and about half that breadth inland. They consist chiefly of the foundations and fallen walls of dwellings and other buildings, all of unhewn stones, except two ruins. One of these is a small structure near the shore, the only one now standing; on a nearer approach, it is seen to have been laid up in later times, with the hewn stones, columns, and pilasters of former buildings. Not far off are the prostrate ruins of an edifice, which, for expense of labour and ornament, surpasses anything we had yet seen in Palestine. . . . The whole place is desolate and mournful. The bright waters of the lake still break upon its shore, and lave the ruins; as once they reflected the edifices, and bore the little fleets, of what of old was no mean city. But the busy hum of men is gone. A few Arabs only, of the Semekîyeh, were here encamped in tents,

and had built up a few hovels among the ruins, which they used as magazines." Dr. Robinson's reason for looking for Capernaum elsewhere, will come under our notice immediately.

We pursue the same south-west course along the margin of the lake. Our path leads across the gentle slope of the hills, which here come quite down to the shore. The ground is thickly strewn with black volcanic stones; and we soon reach high rocky ground, which extends out as a promontory into the lake, "so that only a narrow and difficult path, hewn in the rock, leads round its point above the water." Having passed this point, which is only an hour's distance from Tell Hum, the coast of the lake runs more nearly south, and on the right hand the hills recede so as to form a small but beautiful plain. From Khan Minyeh, at its northern extremity, to Mejdal, at its southern, the distance along the coast is about an hour, and along the foot of the hills which form its western boundary, it is an hour and a half. This plain is well watered by several important fountains, and by the Wadis, which lead down from the adjacent heights; and having a soil of rich black mould, its fertility, Dr. Robinson says, can hardly be exceeded. "All kinds of grain and vegetables are produced in abundance, including rice in the moister parts; while the natural productions are those of a more southern latitude." The description of Josephus may be somewhat exaggerated, but the beauty, fertility,

and climate of the plain, sufficiently account for its glowing colours. "On account of its fertility, it refuses no tree. . . . One may say that it is the ambition of nature, which forces together the things that are naturally enemies to one another; and that there is a happy contention of the seasons of the year, as if each of them laid claim to this district as its own; for it not only nourishes different sorts of fruits beyond man's expectation, but long preserves them. It supplies man with the principal fruits, with grapes and figs, during ten months of the year, without intermission, and with the rest of the fruits throughout the whole year as they ripen in course." One of the fountains in this favoured plain was thought to be a vein of the Nile, because it produced the Coracine fish like the lake near Alexandria.

The "Little Ghor," (El-Ghuweir,) as this plain is now called, is no other than the "land of Gennesareth,"* so called both in the New Testament and by Josephus. And could we be certain that that designation was never extended beyond the plain, we must look in this plain for Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. The Jewish historian certainly restricts it to the plain, for he speaks of the length of "the

* "The land of Gennesareth is a beautiful little plain, extending along the shore nearly four miles, and about two miles from the lake to the foot of the hills at the broadest part. It is in the shape of a bow and string at full stretch, and there is a gentle slope from the hills to the water's edge all round. It seems highly probable that part of the hills which inclose it may have been included in the territory of Gennesareth in the days of its splendour."—*Bonar and M'Cheyne's Mission of Inquiry*, p. 384.

country named Gennesar," along the banks of the lake as thirty stadia, (furlongs,) and its breadth twenty—an extent which, if rather beyond the exact measurement, could not be intended to include any portion of "the region beyond." On this ground, Robinson concludes that Capernaum could not have been situated at Tell Hum, an hour's distance from the plain, but was probably at Khan Minyeh, at its northern extremity. Often as Capernaum is mentioned in the New Testament, as the residence of our Lord, and the scene of his teaching and miracles, there yet occurs no specification of its local situation, except the somewhat indefinite notice, that it lay "upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtalim;" and by "borders" we do not understand the strict marginal boundary, but the district in its neighbourhood. After the miraculous feeding of the five thousand on the eastern side of the lake, three of the evangelists relate, that the disciples took ship to return to the other side; and it was on this passage that Jesus came to them during the storm, walking on the water. According to Matthew and Mark, when they were thus gone over, "they came to the land of Gennesaret." But John relates more definitely, that the disciples, on setting off from the eastern shore, "went over the sea toward Capernaum;" and after Jesus had stilled the tempest, "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." He further relates, that the multitude also took shipping,

and came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus, and found him there, or at least not far distant. From all these notices, it follows conclusively, that Capernaum lay on that part of the western shore known as the region of Gennesaret. The evangelist Mark likewise says, that the disciples set off to go over the lake to Bethsaida, from which, in connexion with the preceding notices, it further follows, that the Bethsaida of Galilee lay near to Capernaum, and probably in the same tract of Gennesareth.* But this land of Gennesaret was no other than the fertile plain of El-Ghuweir, extending along the shore from Khan Minyeh, on the north, to El-Mejdel, on the south.

There is one incidental reference which favours the opinion that Capernaum was nearer the northern extremity of the lake than Khan Minyeh. "Mark says, that when the people saw that Jesus and his apostles had taken a boat to go to a desert place, [on the east of the lake,] immediately before the feeding of the five thousand, they ran a-foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them and came together unto him. It is much more difficult to see how they could get on foot to the east of the lake before the arrival by ship of Christ and his apostles, after a passage of which no adverse circumstance is related, if we suppose them to start from the Khan Minyeh, than it is if we suppose them to start from the Tell el-Hum. With reference to this matter, let the reader for a moment examine

* Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. iii., pp. 289, 290.

the map."* But "the desert place" to which Christ went on this occasion, was not only on the eastern side, but some distance north of the lake, near the eastern Bethsaida, and an examination of the map will show, that it was as near to it even from the Aîn et-Tin or Khan Minyeh by land as by water.

Of "Bethsaida of Galilee"—the birthplace of Andrew, and Peter, and Philip—and Chorazin, neither Dr. Robinson nor Dr. Wilson could discover even the name. And our ignorance of the sites of these once privileged cities, and the difficulty of obtaining certainty in reference to the site of Capernaum, give emphasis to the solemn commination of our Lord, "WOE UNTO THEE, CHORAZIN! WOE UNTO THEE, BETHSAIDA! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. AND THOU, CAPERNAUM, WHICH ART EXALTED UNTO HEAVEN, SHALT BE BROUGHT DOWN TO HELL: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day," Matt. xi. 21—23.

The Mejdél, of which we have had occasion to speak, and which is described as "a miserable little Moslem village," is obviously the Magdala, into the coasts of which Christ came by ship from the other side, after feeding

* Dr. Wilson's *Lands of the Bible*, vol. ii., p. 145.

the four thousand miraculously. It is probably the Migdal-el of the book of Joshua, one of the cities assigned to the tribe of Naphtali. Here was born one of those honoured women, who "ministered of their substance" to Him whose was "the world, and the fulness thereof." Mary was delivered from the affliction of being possessed by seven devils, and loved her Deliverer much. She was "last at the cross, and first at the tomb."

In an hour and a half from Mejdél, we reach Tiberias. In the days of our Lord, this was a new city, having been founded by Herod Antipas, and named in honour of his friend and patron, the emperor Tiberius. Whether built on the site of a more ancient place, it is now impossible to determine. Herod collected inhabitants from all quarters for his new city, and granted them many privileges; he built here a royal palace, which was afterwards destroyed in a popular tumult. About the middle of the second century after Christ, Tiberias became the head-quarters of Judaism in the Holy Land, and soon after the residence of the renowned rabbi, Judah the Holy, who collected and committed to writing the great mass of Jewish traditional laws, now known as the Mishnah. Its fortunes occupy a prominent place in the history of the vicissitudes of the land.

Tiberias and Safed are the two holy cities of the modern Jews in ancient Galilee, like Jerusalem and Hebron in Judæa. Tiberias retains something of its former renown for

Hebrew learning. Dr. Wilson was deeply impressed with the intelligence of some of the rabbis whom he met here. "When we were conversing with them," he says, "on the subject of the Jews embracing Christianity, they said they were very much offended by Jewish converts marrying Gentile wives. We vindicated their liberty to do so as Christians. On this they said, 'Their posterity must be impure.' 'How so?' added we; 'Had not David, the beloved king, of whom the Messiah, according to your own belief, is to be, Ruth the Moabitess for his great-grandmother?' This question proved a poser to them, and they began to search through some old dusty volumes for an answer."

It is singular that the Jews should expect their Messiah to make his first appearance in the parts of Galilee bordering on the Lake of Tiberias. Their fathers did not so understand the prophet's reference to "a great light" in the land of Zebulun, and in the land of Naphtali; for they said, "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet;" and the modern expectation is no doubt the fruit, though the Jews are unconscious of it, of a fulfilment long past. The year 1843 was looked forward to by many, as the year of their visitation; but their hopes, though disappointed for the thousandth time, are not destroyed. The devout Jews repair to the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali to await the advent of their king, "believing that they will be privileged first to join his hosts, and to

go up with him to Jerusalem, where they think he will raise his saints, and collect his living people, to reign over them for evermore."

The most affecting scene witnessed by Dr. Wilson in the Holy Land was, he says, the praying of the Khasidîm, or Puritan Jews, at Tiberias. "Their excitement and apparent importunity were frightful; and they appeared as if determined at once to take heaven by storm, springing upon their toes, beating their breasts, and groaning and crying simultaneously, at the highest pitch of their voices." "They roared aloud, as if they wished to be heard at Jerusalem, twisted their garments with their hands, stamped with their feet, contorted their faces, and wept most piteously, as if labouring under the greatest mental agony. Their delusion seemed great, and their importunity for the advent of the Messiah uncontrollable. Yet, on leaving the synagogue, they returned to their homes in peace—slowly enough, indeed, according to the rabbinical rule, to mark their reluctance to leave the house of God."

The walls of the town were thrown down by the earthquake of January 1st, 1837, and are still in ruins. Very many of the houses were destroyed; indeed, few remained without injury. Seven or eight hundred persons, of whom the greater part were Jews, perished in that awful visitation. The present population is about two thousand, eight or nine hundred of whom are Jews. The whole town is "mean

and miserable, a picture of disgusting filth and frightful wretchedness." And yet Tiberias, with one or two Moslem villages, is the only remaining representative of the crowd of cities and hamlets which covered the western shores of the Sea of Galilee. The fish of the lake is still abundant, but the fishermen are gone. The soil around is productive, but it lies comparatively untilled. Large fields of thistles, the stalks often six or eight feet in height, and bearing twelve or fifteen heads, remind the traveller of the threatening, "Upon the land of my people shall come up briers and thorns;" and he knows that material restoration and improvement will follow only in the wake of spiritual and moral change. It is when the Spirit shall be poured from on high, that the wilderness will become again a fruitful field.

There is another object of interest to be examined before leaving Tiberias—the celebrated hot springs, of which all travellers take pains to inform us. They are reached by a walk of thirty-five minutes southwards.* On the way are many traces of ruins, evidently belonging to the ancient city. They consist mostly of foundations, with remains of walls, heaps of stones, and a thick wall for some distance along the sea. Near the middle lie

* According to Josephus, they were not far from Tiberias, and were called Ammaus, signifying "warm baths;" so that this name would seem to be very probably merely the Greek form of the Hebrew Hammath, which has the same signification. The Talmud also everywhere speaks of these baths as the ancient Hammath. The present Arabic word for warm baths is, in like manner, the kindred form Hūmmām.

several scattered columns of grey granite, twelve or fifteen feet long, and at some distance a single solitary column is still standing. . . . These traces of ancient remains extend nearly to the baths.

The baths are on a part of the shore, a little elevated above the sea. There is an old bathing house now in decay, though baths for the common people are still kept up in it. A new building has been erected a few rods further north by Ibrahim Pasha; it was commenced in 1833, and passes here, and with reason, for a splendid edifice. The principal or public bath occupies the centre of the building, consisting of a large circular apartment, with a marble pavement all round the circular reservoir in the middle, to which several steps lead down. The roof is supported by columns. There are several doors, and between them niches or recesses in the wall, for the use of the bathers. The traveller, in passing through this apartment, finds the heat and steam so very oppressive, that he is glad to regain the open air. In the same building are private rooms, furnished in an uncommonly good oriental style. Dr. Robinson went into one of them, in which was a large and beautiful bath of white marble. Just above the old building is the round reservoir, arched over; in which the water from the springs is first collected, and suffered to cool to the proper temperature for the use of the new baths.

There are four springs—one flowing out

under the old building, and three others at intervals of a few paces further south. A covered channel now runs along before them all, collecting the water, and conducting it to the reservoir ; so that the comparatively small quantity which still flows in their former channels down to the sea, appears merely as if oozing out of the ground, rather than as coming from large springs. The water, as it issues from the ground, is too hot to bear the hand in it ; a thermometer, examined while still in the water, stands at 144° Fahr. The taste is exceedingly salt and bitter, like heated sea water ; there is also a strong smell of sulphur, but no taste of it. The water deposits a sediment as it runs down to the sea, which differs in colour below the different springs, being in one white, in another greenish, in a third reddish yellow. These baths are regarded as efficacious in rheumatic complaints, and in cases of debility ; and are visited, principally in July, by people from all parts of Syria.

Thermal springs of this description are not uncommon in Palestine. We have them in the north, at Hasbeiya, and we shall find them in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea. Burckhardt visited a thermal spring near Gadara. For several hundred yards before he arrived at the hot well, he perceived a strong sulphureous smell. The spring is situated in a very narrow plain, in the valley between the river Yarmuk, the principal tributary of the Jordan, and the cliffs which bound it on the north. The spring bubbles

up from a basin, about forty feet in circumference, and five feet in depth, which is inclosed by ruins of walls and buildings, and forms below a small rivulet, which falls at a short distance into the river. The water is so hot, that this traveller found it difficult to keep his hand in it. It deposits upon the stones over which it flows a thick, yellow, sulphureous crust, which the neighbouring Arabs collect to rub their camels with when diseased. There are eight or nine more hot springs within a short distance, and the place is visited by great numbers, both of sick and healthy people, from the neighbourhood of Nabulus and Nazareth, who prefer the hot wells of Gadara (Hammet el-Sheikh) to the bath of Tiberias. These thermal springs are no doubt connected with some volcanic influence, probably that which produces the fearful earthquakes to which the country is subject.

In little more than an hour from the hot baths of Tiberias, or rather of Ammaus, passing the ruins of the ancient Tarichæa by the way, we reach the south-west corner of the lake, and a walk of ten minutes along its southern border will take us to the place where the Jordan emerges from it. The water, as it issues from the lake, is clear as crystal. The river is about thirty feet in width, and six in depth in the middle of the stream. Many travellers have reported that the waters of the Jordan flow through the lake without mingling with those of the lake—a statement on which

Dr. Wilson remarks, "Those who have spoken of the course of the Jordan through the lake being distinctly visible, must have had strange organs of vision, and curious principles of hydrostatics to guide their judgment."

The view of the lake and of the surrounding country from the emergence of the river, though not very diversified, is more interesting (according to Dr. Wilson) than that which is obtained immediately over Tiberias. "The hills on the east side of the lake appear to the eye to form a more regular wall than those on the west side, but this may be owing to the point of view from which they are seen. Along the eastern margin of the lake there appears a small belt of low sand, in which is found the path followed by lord Lindsay. It was over the precipitous banks beyond this that the devil-possessed herd of swine ran violently down a steep plain into the sea, and perished in the waters. The panorama embraces the summit of the snow-crowned Hermon, bearing from the place where we were, (at the mouth of the Jordan,) exactly north-north-east."

Before we leave the Sea of Galilee, (of which the rabbins said of old, "God loved this sea beyond all other seas,") we must notice the Mount of Beatitudes. Never man spake like Him who uttered the weighty and heavenly sayings of that great discourse, to which infidels are compelled to do homage. On their internal evidence we may safely rest the conclusion, that He who spoke them was not "of the earth."

The tradition which points out the scene of our Lord's sermon, may have originated in the position and peculiar configuration, which render the Khūrūm Hattin* a prominent object ; but it is admitted that there is nothing in the form or circumstances of the hill itself to contradict the supposition. "The mount stands single, with no high ground near it for several miles, and, though rising but to some fifty or sixty feet in perpendicular height, commands, from the narrow table-land upon its top, an extensive view over the lake on the one side, and the plain of Galilee on the three others." Not more than two miles north-west from Tiberias, on the way to it, are four or five large blocks of black stone, called by the Arabs, Hejâr en-Nūsâra, "Stones of the Christians ;" and by the Latins, "*Mensa Christi*," which an early tradition marks as the site of the miracle of feeding the five thousand, a miracle which, we believe, was wrought on the other side of the lake.† Two or three miles further on, we find ourselves abreast of the hill which tradition has consecrated ; and the probability of the tradition is "strengthened by the internal evidence of the position of the hill." "It is in the midst of the plain, where," says lord Nugent, "it is more easy to understand how the multitudes, who had followed him earlier on that day, joined him 'when he came down from the mountain,'

* "Horns of Hattin," a name derived from one of the aspects which the hill presents to the approaching traveller.

† Compare Matthew xv. 29—39, and Mark vii. 31 ; viii. 10.

than if he had retired with the twelve among the gorges of any part of the range further off."

Eleven hundred years after Christ, the Mount of Beatitudes witnessed a different scene. Those who bore his name were strangers to the graces and virtues which He had pronounced "Blessed." Not poor in spirit, nor meek, nor merciful, nor pure in heart, nor peace-makers, but impelled by a blind superstition, commingled with those evil passions "whence come wars," the crusaders only profaned the name and the land for whose honour they had taken up the forbidden sword. It was on the high, uneven plain, extending southwards from the Kurun Hattin, that the arm of their power was irremediably broken. The celebrated and fatal battle of Hattin was fought on the 5th of July, 1187, between the flower of the Christian strength and chivalry on the one side, with the sovereign at their head; and on the other, the eager gathering of the Mohammedan might, led on by the sultan Saladin in person. The weak-minded Guy of Lusignan had usurped the crown of Jerusalem in August of the preceding year, which produced division among those whose safety was in union. In 1187, a reckless baron, Raynald of Chatillon, then lord of Kerek, faithlessly fell upon and plundered a caravan of merchants, passing from Damascus to Arabia. He not only put his prisoners into chains, but refused to deliver both them and the booty, when demanded by

Saladin, according to the terms of the truce then existing. The enraged sultan swore a solemn oath, to put Raynald to death with his own hand, should he ever fall into his power. Many weeks had not passed when the hosts of Saladin broke in like a flood upon the land, and advanced by the northern end of the Lake of Tiberias. When the two armies stood face to face, on the one side, there was feeble leadership, internal division, treachery, and despondency; on the other side, there was the most renowned of all the champions of Islam, and his hosts flushed with confidence. The result was not long doubtful. When the rout became general, and it was evident that all was lost, the king withdrew to the height of Kurun Hattin—the very place, probably, where our Lord, the Prince of peace, had taught those lessons of meekness and love, which were now trodden under foot by hostile armies. From that height, the king of Jerusalem and his followers drove back the Saracens as they attempted to ascend. Three times did the latter storm the height; at length, they got possession of it, and the Christians were either made prisoners, or driven headlong down the steep precipice on the northern side.

When the captive princes were led before Saladin, his eye fell fiercely on Raynald, for he remembered his oath against him. The sultan ordered sherbet, cooled with ice, to be presented to the fallen king of Jerusalem; and when the latter passed it to Raynald, he bade the inter-

preter declare to the king, "Thou givest him drink, not I"—in allusion to the well-known Arab custom, that whoever gives food or drink to another, is bound to protect him at all hazards. After the prisoners, with the exception of Raynald, had been refreshed with food, Saladin invited his victim to embrace the doctrines of the prophet. Raynald declared, that he would live and die only in the Christian faith. Saladin rose from his seat, drew his sword, and, with a single blow, struck through his shoulder, whereupon the attendants rushed upon him, and despatched him. All the captive knights, both of the Hospital and the Temple, were beheaded without mercy, and in cold blood, to the number of two hundred. The king and captive princes were transferred to Damascus. In three months, the whole land was under the iron heel of the Saracen conqueror; and to this day it lies prostrate under the curse of Mohammedan sway.*

* See Robinson.

CHAPTER V.

THE JORDAN IN THE GHOR.

Lieutenant Lynch—'Akil—Sheriff Hazzâ—Geographical ignorance—Metallic boats—Emergence of the Jordan—The bridge of Semakh—Second day—Rapids—Meanderings of the river—Night scene—Third day—Difficulties—The Yarmuk—The bridge—Mejamia—Fourth day—The Valley of Jezreel—Historical associations—Gideon and Saul—Mountains of Gilboa—Journey resumed—Fifth day—The swellings of the Jordan—Sixth day—Lieutenant Molyneux—Arabian brotherhood—Heat—Music—Seventh day—Eighth day—The Jabbok—Ninth day—The pilgrims at the ford—The passage of the Israelites—The plains of Jericho.

WE have traced the Jordan from its sources into the Sea of Galilee, and we have now to examine it from the point of its emergence from that memorable lake to the Dead Sea. The voyage on its waters, from the one lake to the other, has been performed only once,* so far as history knows; and we avail ourselves of lieutenant Lynch's narrative, as the best means of conveying a correct impression of the character of the stream, and of the valley through which it flows.

* Of the earlier pilgrims, according to Robinson, Antoninus Martyr, at the close of the sixth century, and St. Willibald, in the eighth, passed down through the whole length of the valley, from Tiberias to Jericho; and in the year 1100, king Baldwin I. accompanied a train of pilgrims from Jericho to

There were two men in Lynch's company, whose character and history will throw light on the condition of the country, and of some of the tribes which roam, rather than dwell, on its soil. The first is described as a "magnificent savage," with a complexion of a rich olive tint, and glossy black hair. The glance of his eye was keen, but soft and lustrous; his person handsome and graceful. This was 'Akîl Aga el Hasseeé, a great border sheikh of the Arabs. Looking at his fine face, almost effeminate in its regularity of feature, it was difficult to imagine that he had been the stern leader of revolt, and that his laughing, careless eye had ever glanced from his stronghold on the hill upon the pasha's troops in the plain, meditating slaughter in their ranks, and booty from the routed Turk; or searched the ravines and the hill sides, the wady and the valley, for the lurking fellahin and their herds. That arm, which, in its easy and graceful position, seemed almost nerveless, had wielded the scimitar with fatal strength; and *he*, seemingly so mild, had successfully led a small, but desperate

Tiberias. But these journeys were of course by land, and we have nothing more than a mere notice of them. Until the present century, most pilgrims and travellers visited the Valley of the Jordan only at Jericho. During this century, many points and limited tracts of the valley have been visited. In 1847, lieutenant Molyneux, of H.M.S. *Sparta*, attempted the navigation of the river, but his boat was attacked and robbed about midway down the Ghor. He resumed his explorations at Jericho, and spent two days on the Dead Sea. For an account of his expedition, see the *Journal of the Geographical Society of London*, vol. xviii., part ii., 1848. Molyneux died a few months after his return, from disease contracted on the shores of the Dead Sea.

bánd, against the authority of the sultan, and forced the governor of Acre to treat with him, and purchase the security of the district with a high office, and the crimson pelisse of honour. The Arabs are made up of contradictions, and 'Akíl is a type of his nation. Mr. Lynch records, that when he arrived at an encampment on one occasion, an Arab woman screamed and wept bitterly at the sight of 'Akíl. She recognised the murderer of her husband in a foray of the previous year. But if the sheikh felt remorse, he was too much of the Stoic to let it appear. Yet the man, who was unmoved by the tears of the woman whom he had made a widow, was filled with sadness when he saw the sufferings of his Arab steed.

The other personage of note was a fine old man, an Arab nobleman, called Sheriff Hazzâ, of Mecca, the thirty-third lineal descendant of the prophet. He was of dark Egyptian complexion, small stature, and intelligent features. His father and elder brother were sheriffs or governors of Mecca, till the latter was deposed by Mehemet Ali ; and in honour of his descent, every Mohammedan who approaches him, kisses his hand with an air of profound respect. He was then awaiting the decision of a lawsuit pending at Constantinople, and on understanding that lieutenant Lynch and his friends were sent from a far but powerful country to solve a scientific question, he condescended to accompany him, and proved of essential service to the expedition. The sheriff was the Nestor,

and 'Akîl the Achilles of the party, in many scenes of difficulty and perplexity.

These men were introduced to Lynch by the Bey of Acre, a deceitful and over-reaching man, and one in whom we have an instance of the vicissitudes of fortune, which are so common in the Ottoman empire. Saïd Bey held office under Ibrahim Pasha when the Egyptians were in possession of the country. But he was detected in malpractices, and condemned to labour for life. When Acre was restored to the Turks he was found in chains, and he now walks as master through the streets which he formerly swept.

The great Valley of the Jordan was, till lately, thought to be without people ; but it is now ascertained to be occupied by various tribes of Arabs, each of which has its own territory of an hour, or two hours, or three hours of the river's banks, and all of which are in a state of perpetual war with each other, and with all others who approach them. The river, from whose banks went forth the notes of peace and love, seems as if taken possession of by evil spirits, which luxuriate in the opportunity of making it the scene of discord and woe. Lieutenant Lynch's adventure was consequently one of great peril.

There were difficulties of another kind, likewise, of which he was ignorant. It seems incredible, that before this voyage the Jordan, with all its historic antiquity, and all its absorbing associations, should be unknown. It

had been visited at many points, and many of its scenes had been described, but its course was still a mystery, and at the date of this enterprise learned men were eagerly discussing the questions to which it gives rise.* As late as 1843, when one of the gold medals of the Royal Geographical Society of London was presented to lieutenant Symonds, who had ascertained the exact depression of the Lake of Tiberias below the level of the Mediterranean to be 328·1 feet, and of the Dead Sea, 1312·2 feet, the president of the society made these remarks : “ It cannot have escaped your notice, that there still remains to be executed in this part of the globe a very important and interesting operation, to account for the very great discrepancy of these figures ; for it follows from these two ascertained levels, that there is a difference of nearly one thousand feet between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea—a distance in direct lines of little more than one degree of latitude, which implies (the Jordan not being a meandering stream) a fall of more than sixteen feet in every mile of its course. This is in itself a very remarkable phenomenon, and calls for the early attention of geographers and travellers. The river has been frequently crossed, and is always noted as a rapid stream, but no cataracts or decided rapids, as such, have been observed ; and no one has traced its banks from one of these points to the other.”

* Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, vol. xviii., part ii., 1848. Articles by Dr. Robinson and Mr. Petermann.





'The Jordan not a meandering stream ! 'The Jordan without rapids ! 'The facts are now ascertained to be quite the contrary ; but this was the idea entertained of the river before lieutenant Lynch's voyage.

Mr. Lynch brought two metallic boats with him across the Atlantic, which were called the *Fanny Mason* and the *Fanny Skinner*, and he purchased the solitary skiff which sailed on the waters of Galilee. On the afternoon of the 10th of April, 1848, with a bright sun and gay spirits, his party steered direct for the outlet of the Jordan. The lake narrowed as they approached its southern extremity. Where they entered the Ghor, "the scenery assumed rather a tame than a savage character. The rough and barren mountains, skirting the valley on each hand, stretched far away in the distance, like walls to some gigantic fosse, their southern extremities half hidden, or entirely lost in a faint purple mist."

The expedition was divided into a land party and a water party ; the former received instructions to keep as near to the latter as the nature of the country would admit. The water party lost sight of the lake about five minutes after leaving it. The river was found to pursue a winding course from the first ; its average breadth was about seventy-five feet ; the banks rounded, and about thirty feet high, luxuriantly clothed with grass and flowers—the scarlet anemone, the yellow marigold, and occasionally a water lily, and here and there

a straggling asphodel, close to the water's edge, but not a tree nor a shrub.

In little more than an hour, the boatmen came in sight of the partly whole and partly crumbled abutments of the "Jisr Semakh," the bridge of Semakh. "The ruins are extremely picturesque; the abutments standing in various stages of decay, and the fallen fragments obstructing the course of the river; save at one point, towards the left bank, where the pent-up water finds an issue, and runs in a sluice among the scattered masses of stone." The village of Semakh is perched on a round sandy hill on the left. Over the ruins of the bridge the river foams like a mountain torrent, and the navigators were in imminent danger as they shot down between the old piers. Safely moored below the bridge, they paused for the night, and looked around them. They found the soil of a dark rich loam, three feet deep, luxuriantly clothed with flowers. The rocks nowhere cropped out, but large boulders of sandstone and trap were scattered over the surface.

SECOND DAY, April 11.—The expedition started about eight o'clock; and in a few minutes found that the river, for more than three hundred yards, was one foaming rapid; the fishing weirs, and the ruins of another ancient bridge, obstructing the passage. Everything was taken out of the boats, and the men sent into the water, to swim alongside and guide them, and shoot them successively down the

first rapid. The water was very deep to the first fall, where it precipitated itself over a ledge of rocks. The river becoming more shallow, they opened a channel by removing large stones, and as the current was now excessively swift, they pulled well out into the stream, "bows up," let go a grapnel, and eased each boat down in succession. But before them were yet five successive falls, about eighteen feet in all, with rapids between, "a perfect breakdown in the bed of the river," and it was evident that the boats could not descend them.

On the right of the river, opposite to the point where the weirs and the ruined bridge blocked up the bed of the stream, was a canal or sluice, made for the purpose of feeding a mill, the ruins of which were visible at a short distance below. This canal, at its outlet from the river, was sufficiently broad and deep to admit of the boats entering and proceeding for a short distance, when it became too narrow to allow their further progress. They now took everything out of the boats, and cleared away the stones, bushes, and other obstructions between the mill sluice and the river. A breach was then made in the bank of the sluice, and as the water rushed down the shallow artificial channel, the men, cheerfully assisted by a number of Arabs, bore them down the rocky slope with immense labour, and launched them in the bed of the river; but not below all danger, for a sudden descent of six or seven

feet was yet to be cleared, and some eighty yards of swift and shallow current to be passed, before reaching an unobstructed channel. In accomplishing this difficult passage, almost the whole party were up to their waists in water for four hours.

The afternoon brought with it a recurrence of the same means of "evading" a difficulty. They came to two mills, the buildings entire, but the wheels and machinery gone, with a sluice which had formerly supplied them with water. As in the morning, they turned the water from the upper part of the sluice into the river, carried and dragged the boats safely round this second series of rapids. The soil was fertile in this neighbourhood, but the country wholly uncultivated. The surface of the plain was about fifteen feet above the river, thence gradually ascending a short distance to a low range of hills, beyond which, on each side, the prospect was closed in by mountains.

The course of the river was very circuitous all day, and the variety of scene which it presented endless. The perils of nine rapids were encountered, "three of them terrific ones." The average width of the river was forty yards, and its depth from two and a half to six feet. At the end of the day the Lake of Tiberias was but four hours distant in a direct line, although they had been a day and a half on the river, so tortuous was its course, and so interrupted its channel.*

* Perhaps the best illustration which our own country fur-

At eight, P.M., the boats were moored at the head of the falls and whirlpool of Būkáh, and the boatmen joined the land party at their camp, half a mile below. "The encampment was a romantic one. Above was the whirlpool; abreast and winding below glancing in the moonlight, was the silvery sheen of the river; and high up on each side were the ruined villages, whence the peaceful fellahin had been driven by the predatory robber. The whooping of the owl above, the song of the bulbul below, were drowned in the onward rush and deafening roar of the tumultuous waters. . . . The dew fell heavily, and the air was chilly; but neither the beauties of the night, the wild

nishes of windings like those of the Jordan is in the far-famed "links" of the Forth. The distance from Stirling to Alloa, in a direct line, is only six miles, but along the channel of the river it is twenty-four miles. "The sinuosities of the river, or 'links,' as they are here called, almost bewilder by their union of excessive capriciousness and uniform beauty; forming sweeps, and curves, and crescents, and nearly complete circles, and graceful departures of every sort, from the stern angle and the lank straight line, which forcibly remind spectators who have read Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful, of that philosopher's theory as to the elements of beauty. Many peninsulæ are embosomed in the watery foldings, vying in their form and adornments with the loveliness of the stream. Nor is the stranger less delighted with the amusing puzzle in which he finds himself constantly involved, to keep a just, or even a proximate reckoning of the relative positions of the objects which chiefly challenge his attention; for now he is sailing direct away from Stirling Castle, or any other commanding feature of the landscape, and now he is bearing down upon it right in front; he has it now on his right hand, and now on his left; again he recedes from it, and again advances; and at length, in utter, though charming perplexity, he relinquishes all effort to recognise the points of the compass. 'In this sinuous navigation,' says Mr. Gilpin, 'were the mariner to trust entirely to the sails, he would have to wait for the benefit of every wind round the compass several times over.'"—*Fullarton's Gazetteer of Scotland*.

scene around, the bold hills, between which the river rushed and foamed, a cataract, nor moonlight upon the ruined villages, nor tents pitched upon the shore, watch-fires blazing, and the Arab bard singing sadly to the sound of his rebabeh, (a one-stringed instrument,) could, with all the spirit of romance, keep us long awake. With our hands upon our firelocks, we slept soundly; the crackle of the dry wood of the camp fires, and the low sound of the Arab's song, mingled with our dreams."

THIRD DAY, April 12.—The Galilean boat having perished in the rapids of yesterday, the copper Fanny Mason and the iron Fanny Skinner were now alone. There were dangerous falls before them, and there was no possibility of conveying them by land, while the current was too strong to use the grapnel. The lieutenant's description will save the necessity of description on other similar occasions.

"At 10. 15, A.M., we cast off, and shot down the first rapid, and stopped to examine more closely a desperate looking cascade of eleven feet. In the middle of the channel was a shoot, at an angle of about sixty degrees, with a bold, bluff, threatening rock at its foot, exactly in the passage. It would, therefore, be necessary to turn almost at a sharp angle in descending, to avoid being dashed to pieces. This rock was on the outer edge of the whirlpool, which, a caldron of foam, swept round and round in circling eddies. Yet below were two fierce rapids, each about one hundred and fifty yards

in length, with the points of black rocks peering above the white and agitated surface. Below them again, within a mile, were two other rapids, longer, but more shelving and less difficult.

“Fortunately, a large bush was growing upon the left bank, about five feet up, where the wash of the water from above had formed a kind of promontory. By swimming across some distance up the stream, one of the men had carried over the end of a rope, and made it fast around the roots of the bush. The great doubt was, whether the hold of the roots would be sufficient to withstand the strain, but there was no alternative. In order not to risk the men, I employed some of the most vigorous Arabs in the camp to swim by the side of the boats, and guide them, if possible, clear of danger. Landing the men, therefore, and tracking the Fanny Mason up stream, we shot her across, and gathering in the slack of the rope, let her drop to the brink of the cascade, where she faintly trembled and bent in the fierce strength of the sweeping current. It was a moment of intense anxiety. The sailors had now clambered along the banks, and stood at intervals below, ready to assist us if thrown from the boat and swept toward them. One man with me in the boat stood by the line; a number of naked Arabs were upon the rocks and in the foaming water, gesticulating wildly, their shouts mingling with the noise of the boisterous rapids, and their dusky forms contrasting strangely with the

effervescing flood, and four on each side in the water were clinging to the boat, ready to guide her clear of the threatening rock, if possible.

"The Fanny Mason, in the meanwhile, swayed from side to side of the mad torrent, like a frightened steed, straining the line which held her. Watching the moment when her bows were brought in the right direction, I gave the signal to let go the rope. There was a rush, a plunge, an upward leap—and the rock was cleared—the pool was passed; and half full of water, with breathless velocity, we were swept safely down the rapid. Such screaming and shouting! the Arabs seemed to exult more than ourselves. It was in seeming only they were glad; but we were grateful. Two of the Arabs lost their hold, and were carried far below us, but were rescued with a slight injury to one of them.

"It was exactly twelve o'clock when we cleared the cascade. Mr. Aulick soon followed in the Fanny Skinner, and, by his skill and coolness, passed down in perfect safety."

Four hours after, the boats passed the mouth of the Yarmuk, the ancient Hieromax, and found it forty yards wide, with moderate current. This river flows from the distant mountains of the Hauran, in the east; and, were length alone to determine the question, might be regarded as the Jordan, rather than the stream we have followed down from the mountains of Lebanon. The Yarmuk waters the ancient Bashan, and, with the exception of the Zerka Main, which falls into the Dead Sea, is the

only perennial river which comes into the Valley of the Jordan. It is generally described as being about two hours in a direct line from the Lake of Tiberias ; but if Lynch's statement be not incorrect, it must be four or five hours.

On nearing another very steep and tumultuous rapid, lieutenant Lynch climbed an almost perpendicular hill side, to examine for a passage. The hill was about three hundred feet high, and the view from the summit wild and peculiar. The high alluvial terraces on each side were everywhere shaped, by the action of the winter rains, into a number of conical hills, some of them pyramidal and cuneiform, presenting the appearance of a giant encampment, so perfectly tent-like were their shapes. This singular configuration extended southwards as far as the eye could reach. At intervals, he caught a glimpse of the river in its graceful meanderings, sometimes glittering like a spear-head through an opening in the foliage of its banks, and again, clasping some little island with its shiny arms, or far away, rushing with the fierceness and white foam of a torrent by some projecting point.

The process of descent on this occasion was somewhat similar to that which has been just described. The place of encampment for the night was a little below the Jisr Mejâmiâ, the bridge of the place of meeting, which is on the way from Nabulus to Damascus. The river is here deep, narrow, and impetuous. Above and below the bridge, and in the bed of the river,

are huge blocks of trap and conglomerate ; and almost immediately opposite is a great fissure, exposing perpendicular layers of basalt, the structure distinct, black, and porous.

FOURTH DAY, April 13.—On the left is the land of Gad, a part of the more ancient Gilead, famous for its pastures and its balsams : “ Is there no balm in Gilead ? ” On the right is the land of Issachar, and within a few miles the Valley of Jezreel opens into the Valley of the Jordan. This place is too famous to be passed unnoticed. The valley runs down between the Little Hermon on the north, and the Mountains of Gilboa on the south, and is about three miles wide where we visit it on the Jordan. It is connected with the great plain of Esdraelon, beyond the mountains westward. The village of Beisan is associated with some remarkable and affecting circumstances of remote history. It stands on rising ground at the lower end of the Valley of Jezreel, and contains seventy or eighty houses. The inhabitants are described as a fanatical set, and have become rather notorious among travellers for their lawless demeanour.

The name and situation of Beisan identify it with the ancient Bethshan, or Bethshean, the ruins of which are of considerable extent, and show that the town must have been nearly an hour in circuit. The chief remains are large heaps of black hewn stones, with many foundations of houses, and fragments of a few columns. Irby and Mangles found a theatre, measuring

about one hundred and eighty feet across the front; and also excavated tombs without the walls, with sarcophagi remaining in some of them, and several of the doors still hanging on the ancient hinges of stone, in remarkable preservation. Tell-Beisan, the Acropolis of the former city, is a high circular hill, on the top of which are the traces of the walls which encompassed it.

Bethshean was assigned to Manasseh, though it lay within the borders of Issachar. Very early after the exile it took in Greek the name of Scythopolis, the reason of which is still a disputed question. Pompey passed this way from Damascus to Jerusalem; the place was one of those built up by Gabinius, the Roman consul, and became the largest of the collection of cities known by the name of the Decapolis, and the only one of them west of the Jordan. The town, though weak, was gallantly and successfully defended by its inhabitants against Saladin, in A.D. 1182; although the very next year it was deserted on his approach, and after being plundered by him, was consigned to the flames. It was a place of such high repute among the Jews, that the Talmud says, "If the garden of Eden were in the land of Israel, Bethshan was its gate;" and it is added, "that its fruits were the sweetest in Israel."

The great valley in which Bethshean stood is celebrated for the remarkable victory of Gideon, and the last fatal overthrow of Saul. The Midianites, the Amalekites, and the chil-

dren of the east, had come over Jordan, and pitched in the valley of Israel ; and Gideon had gathered the Israelites of the northern tribes together, and encamped at the well of Harod, probably on Mount Gilboa. " And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand ; and there remained ten thousand." By further tests, the followers of Gideon were reduced to three hundred. The host of Midian lay beneath in the valley, " like grasshoppers for multitude." Gideon went down to the host, and overheard the recital of a dream, which greatly encouraged him. And then, with " the sword of the Lord and of Gideon " for his war cry, and the three hundred for his army, he attacked and miraculously routed the whole host of Midian.

The story of Saul is one never to be forgotten. " The Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem : and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."

Forsaken of God, and in the depth of his despair, the trembling monarch disguised himself, and crossed over the ridge of the Little Hermon to Endor, to consult a famous sorceress. The following day the battle took place, and "the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in Mount Gilboa." "The battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was sore wounded of the archers." His armour-bearer would not comply with his request to take his life; therefore "Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." "And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them." The victors cut off the head of their fallen enemy, and fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan; but it was rescued from further indignity by the valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead, who crossed the Jordan by night, and "took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burned them there," and buried their ashes under a tree. The injured, but generous David, did not exult over an event which raised himself to a throne. His elegy is full of noble sentiment and profound feeling:—

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let
there be rain upon you.

* * * * *

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle !
O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places,
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan ;
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me ;
Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished ! ”

But we return from the Valley of Jezreel, and resume the southward course of the Jordan. The expedition encountered three large and seven small rapids. The terms “labyrinthine,” and “serpentine,” sufficiently indicate the character of the course which the river pursues. The two terraces of the Jordan, through the lower of which the stream flows, were sometimes very marked and striking ; and sometimes “the hill sides presented the appearance of chalk, without the slightest vestige of vegetation, and were absolutely blinding from the reverberated sunlight.” “There is nothing more vivid,” says Mr. Lynch, “than the impression made by such scenes—the stillness of an untrodden wilderness, when ‘the slightest sound makes an onslaught upon silence’—a silence rarely broken, except by the noise of the far distant rapid, which comes upon the ear like the wind, when it sweeps the dry leaves of autumn before it.”

The first hour of the journey of the land party was through a most beautiful tract of alluvial soil, but the country was entirely destitute of cultivation, nothing but a rank luxuriance of thistles and wild grass indicating the

natural productiveness of the soil. The variety of thorns and thistles was remarkable. Along the banks of the river ran a singular terrace of low hills, in shape like truncated cones, which extended quite to the base of the mountains. From thistles and wild grass they advanced into utter barrenness and desolation, the soil presenting the appearance of chalk without the slightest vegetation. Around, and quite near, were large flocks of storks, walking with an air of exceeding vanity, and in no manner alarmed or disconcerted.

“At one time they (the land party) stopped to rest ; and, seated in the wilderness, the fierce sun beat upon their heads, and glittered on the barrels of their guns, until they became painful to sight and touch. Not a tree, nor a shelter from the heat, in that vast plain ! but up from the parched and blasted earth went streaming, like visible air, the waving, heated atmosphere ; and the whole extent of land, to the deep-rooted hills in the purple distance, was quivering with the heat. Starting afresh, a short ride brought them once more near the banks of the river, down to which they turned their horses. It was almost impossible to restrain the thirsty brutes. At the sight and sound of the flowing river, they dashed down the slope, plunged through the thicket, and standing mid-leg in the stream, thrust in their heads to the very eyes, and drank till their whole frame shook with the action.”

Several encampments were passed before the

evening fell in, and patches of cultivation appeared to show what the Valley of the Jordan is still capable of becoming, and to foreshadow what hope delights to contemplate as still its destiny. Our travellers were sensible that "they were changing their climate in a two-fold manner, by descent and by progress southward."

FIFTH DAY, April 14.—The bank of the river was lined this morning by Arabs from a neighbouring encampment, "who were lying at full length upon the bluff, with their heads projecting over the bank, and looking upon the floating wonders beneath."

There was little variety in the scenery of the river to-day. For hours in their swift descent the boats floated down in silence. Here and there were spots of solemn beauty. The scenery also became more wild as they advanced; "and as night, like a gloomy Rembrandt, came throwing her dark shadows through the mountain gorges, sobering down the bright tints upon their summits, the whole scene assumed a strange and savage aspect."

"But altogether the descent to-day was much less difficult than [that of] those which had preceded it. The course of the river formed a never-ending series of serpentine curves, sometimes dashing along in rapids by the base of a mountain, sometimes flowing between two banks, generally lined with trees, and fragrant with blossoms. Some places presented views extremely picturesque, the rapid

rushing of a torrent, the song and sight of birds, the over-hanging trees, and glimpses of the mountains far over the plain. Here and there a gurgling rivulet poured its tributary of pure water into the now discoloured Jordan. The river was falling rapidly, the banks showed a daily fall of about two feet, and frequently we saw sedge and drift wood lodged high up on the branches of overhanging trees, above the surface of the banks, which conclusively proves that the Jordan, in its swellings, still overflows the lower plain, and drives the lion from his lair, as it did in the ancient time."

The width of the river was as much as seventy yards to-day, with a current of two knots in the hour, and narrowed again to thirty yards, with a current of six knots.

"We have to-day passed through the territories of the emir Nassir-el-Ghûzzawy, which are two hours in extent, but more than twice the distance along the tortuous course of the river. The tribe musters three hundred fighting men. The emir and some of his people have wiry hair and very dark complexions, but no other feature of the African. His brother and some of the tribe are bright, but less so than 'Akîl and his followers. The darker colour of the skin may perhaps be attributed to the climate of the Ghor."

SIXTH DAY, April 15.—So far as danger from robbers was concerned, the voyagers were now in the most perilous part of their journey.

This region had not been visited by Franks since the time of the Crusaders, till lieutenant Molyneux descended the Jordan in 1847, and it was here his boatmen were attacked and robbed, and his boat destroyed. A conversation, which was overheard to-day between 'Akîl and the Nassir, in whose territories they were, will illustrate Bedouin manners and the condition of the country. Last year, while in rebellion against the government, 'Akîl, at the head of his Bedouin followers, had swept those plains, and carried off a great many horses, cattle, and sheep; among them the droves and herds of the Nassir. Nassir now asked 'Akîl, if he did not think that he had acted very badly in carrying off his property. The latter answered, that Nassir was then his enemy, and that he had acted according to the usages of war among the tribes. The Nassir then asked about the disposition made of various animals, and especially of a favourite mare. As to the mare, 'Akîl said he had taken a fancy to her, and that it was the one he now rode. This the emir Nassir knew full well, although Arabian etiquette would not allow him to refer to it. After some further conversation, Nassir proposed that they should bury all wrongs, and become brothers. To this 'Akîl assented. The former, thereupon, plucked some grass and earth, and lifting up the corner of 'Akîl's āba, or cloak, placed them beneath it, and then the two Arabs embracing, with clasped hands, swore eternal brotherhood. This vow would

never be broken. Some years before, an Arab came to 'Akîl after a predatory expedition, and claimed some sheep, on the ground of fraternization. 'Akîl told him that he did not know and had never seen him before; but the man asserted and proved that their fathers had exchanged vows, and the sheep claimed were consequently restored.

The expedition descended to-day "ten moderate and six ugly rapids," and passed four large and seventeen small islands in the river. The velocity of the current ranged from two to eight knots an hour, the average being about three and a half. The depth was in proportion to the width and velocity of the stream. At one place the river was eighty yards wide, and only two feet deep. The average width was fifty-six yards, and the average depth a little more than four feet. Where the river was narrow, the bottom was usually rock or hard sand, and in the wider parts soft mud. In the narrowest parts, also, the river flowed between high banks, either bald-faced alluvial hills or conglomerate; in one place, fossil rock. Where the stream was wide, the banks were low alluvium, towards the latter part of the day resting upon sand or gravel. Where the stream was wide and sluggish, running between alluvial banks, the water was discoloured; in some places of a milky hue. Where narrow, and flowing between and over rocks, it was comparatively clear. Excepting once, early in the afternoon, when a light air from the eastward

swept through an opening, it was a perfect calm, and the heat felt oppressive, yet less so than the dazzling glare of light.

“Looking out upon the desert, bright with reverberated light and heat, was like beholding a conflagration from a window at twilight. Each detail of the strange and solemn scene could be examined as through a lens. The mountains towards the west rose up like islands from the sea, with the billows heaving at their bases. The rough peaks caught the slanting sunlight, while sharp black shadows marked the sides turned from the rays. Deep-rooted in the plain, the bases of the mountains heaved the garment of the earth away, and rose abruptly in naked, pyramidal crags, each scar and fissure as palpably distinct as though within reach—and yet we were hours away; the lamination of their strata resembling the leaves of some gigantic volume, wherein is written by the hand of God the history of the changes he has wrought. . . .

“The plain that sloped away from the bases of the hills was broken into ridges and multitudinous cone-like mounds, resembling tumultuous water ‘at the meeting of adverse tides,’ and presented a wild and chequered tract of land, with spots of vegetation flourishing upon the frontiers of irreclaimable sterility.

“A low, pale, yellow ridge of conical hills, marked the termination of the higher terrace, beneath which swept gently this lower plain, with a similar undulating surface, half redeemed

from barrenness by sparse verdure and thistle-covered hillocks.

“Still lower was the Valley of the Jordan! Its banks, fringed with perpetual verdure, winding in a thousand graceful mazes; its pathway cheered with songs of birds, and its own clear voice of gushing minstrelsy; its course a bright line in this cheerless waste.”

But the land is not “made glad” by its “sacred river,” and the very rejoicings of the people are mournful. At this night’s encampment, an attempt was made to enjoy a native concert, but the music both of the amateur and the professional bard is described as “essentially the same in its prevailing sadness;” and Mr. Lynch moralizes thus: “Truly, ‘all the merry-hearted do sigh’ in this strange land; a land from which ‘gladness is taken away,’ and mirth, where it doth exist, hath a dash of grief and a tone of desperate sorrow. The sound of tabret and harp, of sackbut and psaltery, the lute, the viol, and the instrument of two strings, are heard no more in the land; and the ‘rebabeh,’ with its sighing one string, befits the wilderness, and the wandering people who dwell therein.”

SEVENTH DAY, April 16.—“The country presented the same appearance as yesterday, except that conglomerate, or any kind of rock, was rarely seen, but in their stead banks of semi-indurated clay. The lower plain was evidently narrower, and the river often swept alternately against the hills, mostly conical in

their shape, and with bold faces, which flank the lower and mark the elevation of the upper plain. The vegetation was nearly the same in character, save that it was more luxuriant, and of brighter tint on the borders of the stream ; more parched and dull on either side beyond it. The oleander increased ; there was less of the asphodel, and the acacia was rarely seen, as heretofore, a short distance inland. The tamarisk was more dense and lofty, and the canes were frequently thick and impenetrable. There were many drift trees in the stream, and bushes and branches were lodged high up in the trees which lined the banks, and much above the latter—conclusive marks of a recent freshet. There were many trees on each side, charred and blackened by fire—caused, doubtless, by the Arabs having burned the dried-up grass, to renew their pastures.”

The tracks of a tiger, and of some other wild beasts, were identified, as on some former days.

“After dinner, some of the party crossed the river to examine the ruins of a bridge, seen by the land party from the upper terrace, just before descending to the river. They had to force their way through a tangled thicket, and found a Roman bridge spanning a dry bed, once, perhaps, the main channel of the Jordan, now diverted in its course. The bridge was of Roman construction, with one arch entire, except a longitudinal fissure on the top, and the ruins of two others, one of them at right

angles with the main arch, probably for a mill sluice. The span of the main arch was fifteen feet; the height from the bed of the stream to the keystone, twenty feet."

EIGHTH DAY, April 17.—The air this morning was damp and chilly, but the sun soon put forth all his strength. The vegetation was more tropical than heretofore. Early in the afternoon, the expedition passed the mouth of the Zerka, or Zurka, the river Jabbok, "a small stream, trickling down a deep and wide torrent bed. The water was sweet, but the stones upon the bare exposed bank were covered with salt. There was another bed, then dry, showing that, in times of freshet, there were two outlets to this tributary, which is incorrectly placed upon the maps.* There was much of the ghurrah, which seems to delight in a dry soil and a saline atmosphere. The efflorescence on the stones, and on the leaves of the ghurrah, must be a deposition of the atmosphere when the wind blows from the Dead Sea, about twenty miles distant in a direct line."

The Jabbok rises in the mountains in the south-east of Gilead, and its course of about fifty miles is nearly due east. In its passage westward across the plains, it is said to pass underground more than once, and in summer

* The Jabbok is commonly placed on maps midway between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea, that is, thirty miles distant from either in a direct line. Dr. Kitto, in his *Biblical Cyclopædia*, speaks of it as thirty miles from the Lake of Tiberias, but in his *Pictorial Bible* says it is forty miles, a statement which corresponds with Mr. Lynch's estimate.

the upper portion of its channel becomes dry. But, on entering the more hilly country, immediately east of the Jordan, it receives tribute from several springs, which maintain it a perennial stream, although very low in summer; and not only its volume, but the length of its course, is much smaller in summer than in winter.

It was on the banks of the Jabbok those mysterious, but instructive circumstances took place, in which Jacob proved the power of prayer, and obtained the honourable name of Israel. The tribe of Gad in after time built a city on or near the spot, and gave it the name of Penuel. Gideon, on his return from pursuing the Midianites, threw down the tower of the city, and slew the inhabitants, for having insulted him, and refused to supply his troops with provisions, when on the pursuit.

Lieutenant Lynch, in his anxiety to reach the Pilgrim's Ford, pursued his journey even when the light of day failed him. "The sun went down," he says, "and night gradually closed in upon us, and the rush of the river seemed more impetuous as the light decreased. We twice passed down rapids, taking care each time to hug the boldest shore. Besides the transition from light to darkness, we had exchanged a heated and stifling for a chilly atmosphere. . . . There had been such a break-down in the bed of the stream, since we passed the Jabbok, and such evident indications of volcanic formation, that we became

exceedingly anxious. In the obscure gloom we seemed to be stationary, and the shores to be flitting by us. With its tumultuous rush the river hurried us onward, and we knew not what the next moment would bring forth—whether it would dash us upon a rock, or plunge us down a cataract. . . . At 9. 30, P.M., we arrived at ‘El-Meshra,’ the bathing-place of the Christian pilgrims, after having been fifteen hours in the boats.” The land party had arrived some hours before them, and pitched the tents for their reception.

From El-Meshra, Mr. Lynch wrote to the secretary of the American navy: “The great secret of the depression between Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea is solved by the tortuous course of the Jordan. In a space of sixty miles of latitude, and four or five miles of longitude, the Jordan traverses at least two hundred miles. The river is in the latter stage of a freshet—a few weeks earlier or later, and passage would have been impracticable. As it is, we have plunged down twenty-seven threatening rapids, besides a great many of lesser magnitude.”

NINTH DAY, April 18.—The repose of the explorers was refreshing, but brief. The following day was the occasion of the great annual visit of the pilgrims to the reputed scene of the passage of the Israelites and the baptism of our Lord. And we shall hear the lieutenant’s account of the proceedings of the day:—

“At 3, A.M., we were aroused by the intelligence that the pilgrims were coming. Rising

in haste, we beheld thousands of torchlights, with a dark mass beneath, moving rapidly over the hills. Striking our tents with precipitation, we hurriedly removed them and all our effects a short distance to the left. We had scarcely finished when they were upon us ; men, women, and children, mounted on camels, horses, mules, and donkeys, rushed impetuously by toward the bank. They presented the appearance of fugitives from a routed army.

“ Our Bedawin friends here stood us in good stead ; striking their tufted spears before our tents, they mounted their steeds, and formed a military cordon around us. But for them we should have been run down, and most of our effects trampled upon, scattered, and lost. Strange that we should have been shielded from a Christian throng by wild children of the desert—Moslems in name, but pagans in reality. Nothing but the spears and swarthy faces of the Arabs saved us. . . .

“ The party which had disturbed us was the advanced guard of the great body of the pilgrims. At 5, just at the dawn of day, the last made its appearance, coming over the crest of a high ridge, in one tumultuous and eager throng.

“ In all the wild haste of a disorderly rout, Copts and Russians, Poles, Armenians, Greeks, and Syrians, from all parts of Asia, from Europe, from Africa, and from far distant America—on they came ; men, women, and children, of every age and hue, and in every

variety of costume ; talking, screaming, shouting, in almost every known language under the sun. Mounted as variously as those who had preceded them, many of the women and children were suspended in baskets, or confined in cages ; and with their eyes strained towards the river, heedless of all intervening obstacles, they hurried eagerly forward, and dismounting in haste, and disrobing with precipitation, rushed down the bank, and threw themselves into the stream.

“ They seemed to be absorbed by one impulsive feeling, and perfectly regardless of the observation of others. Each one plunged himself, or was dipped by another, three times below the surface, in honour of the Trinity, and then filled a bottle, or some other utensil, from the river. The bathing dress of many of the pilgrims was a white gown, with a black cross upon it, (their shroud.) Most of them, as soon as they were dressed, cut branches of the *agnus castus*, or willow, and, dipping them in the consecrated stream, bore them away as memorials of their visit.

“ In an hour they began to disappear ; and in less than three hours the trodden surface of the lately crowded bank reflected no human shadow. The pageant disappeared as rapidly as it had approached, and left to us once more the silence and the solitude of the wilderness. It was like a dream. An immense crowd of human beings, said to be eight thousand, but I thought not so many, had passed and

repassed before our tents, and left not a vestige behind them."

The pilgrims, whose visit to the Jordan was witnessed by Mr. Lynch and his friends, seem to have been the adherents of the Greek and oriental churches. The place held sacred by the adherents of the Latin church as the "place of the passage," and the place of Christ's baptism, is three miles higher up. The Roman Catholic finds virtue in the waters of the Jordan seven miles from the Dead Sea, because there, he believes, Christ was baptized; and the Greek finds equal virtue three miles lower down, because there he believes his Lord was baptized: and both neglect the Fountain which was "opened for sin and uncleanness," in the great atonement of Him by whose name they are called.

The passage of the Israelites certainly took place in this neighbourhood, for it was "right against Jericho," but probably not at either or any particular ford. "The waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap And those that came down toward the sea failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho,"—that is, the waters above being held back, those below flowed off, and left the channel towards the Dead Sea dry; so that the people, amounting to more than two millions of souls, were not confined to a single point, but could pass over any part of the empty channel, directly from the plains of Moab towards Jericho.

“The manner in which the passage took place seems to be this. The priests, bearing the ark at the distance of two thousand cubits from the host, marched onward, and in full confidence of the Divine promise, proceeded as if to enter the river; but no sooner did their feet touch its waters, than the waters divided from shore to shore The priests stood still in the mid channel until the entire host had passed over. They seem to have been placed, not so that the people passed on each side of them as they stood there, but only below them, that is, between them and the sea—the ark of God being thus interposed between the people and the suspended waters, that the faint-hearted might feel the more assured. It must have taken a considerable time for so vast a multitude with women, children, and baggage, to pass over; and the constancy which the priests exhibited on this occasion bears honourable testimony to their faith.” It was, in fact, an act of the strongest faith, and of the sublimest heroism, inspired by God himself.

The passage of the Israelites was the more extraordinary, that it occurred while the Jordan “overflowed all its banks,” which it did in the first month, or “all the time of harvest.” It may be true, that “the original Hebrew expresses nothing more than that the Jordan ‘was full (or filled) up to all its banks,’ meaning the banks of its channel—that it ran with full banks, or brimful.” But, although the words may not necessarily mean more than this, the larger

meaning of our translation, which the original will equally sustain, is well supported by other passages. For instance, the lion (and, by implication, other ravenous beasts) is described as driven from its coverts on the banks by the "swellings" of the river, which would hardly be possible unless the inner channel were not merely filled, but overflowed, so as to inundate the thickets which are above the inner channel of the river. A comparison with the inundations of the Nile would probably convey an exaggerated idea of the "swellings" of the Jordan; but the observations of Lynch, which we have already reported, and of other travellers, leave no room to doubt that they overflowed the inner channel, and covered, at least partially, the lower valley.

The annual increase of the Jordan takes place near the close of the rainy season, or even after it. This is sometimes ascribed to the late melting of the snows of Hermon; but at this season these snows have usually long been melted, and nothing remains but the mountain's icy crown. There are natural causes, however, which sufficiently explain the phenomenon. In the first place, the heavy rains of November and December find the earth in a parched and thirsty state; and among the loose limestone rocks and caverns of Palestine, a far greater proportion of the water is absorbed than is usual in countries where rains are frequent. Then, the conformation of the region through which the Jordan flows must be taken into the account.

The rains which descend on the mountains around the upper part of the Jordan, and which might be expected to produce sudden and violent inundations, are received into the basins of the Huleh and the Lake of Tiberias, and there spread out over a broad surface, so that all violence is destroyed, and the stream that issues from them can only flow with a regulated current, varying in depth according to the elevation of the lower lake. These lakes, indeed, may be compared to great regulators, which control the violence of the Jordan, and determine the measure of its inundations. "The principle is precisely the same," says Dr. Robinson, "(though on a far inferior scale,) as that which prevents the sudden rise and overflow of the magnificent streams connecting the great lakes of North America. As now the Lake of Tiberias reaches its highest level at the close of the rainy season, the Jordan naturally flows with its fullest current for some time after that period; and as the rise of the lake naturally varies (like that of the Dead Sea) in different years, so also the fullness of the Jordan."

"The passage of this deep and rapid, though not wide river," says Dr. Hales, "at the most unfavourable season, was more manifestly miraculous, if possible, than that of the Red Sea; because there was no natural agency whatever employed—no mighty wind to sweep a passage, as in the former case—no reflux of the tide, on which minute philosophers might fasten, to depreciate the miracle. It seems,

therefore, to have been providentially designed to silence cavils respecting the former ; and it was done in the noon-day, in the face of the sun, and in the presence, we may be sure, of the neighbouring inhabitants, and struck terror into the kings of the Amorites and Canaanites, westward of the river, whose ' hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.' "

The Valley of the Jordan is here seen in its broadest part. The plains of Moab, on the eastern side, are at least an hour in breadth to the base of the retreating mountains. From the river westward to the village of Rîha, (in which the ancient name Jericho is preserved,) is about two hours, and thence to the mountains, at the opening of Wady Kelt, forty-five minutes. Taking in a recess further south, the breadth of the valley in this part may be estimated at from three and a half to four hours, or from ten to twelve English miles.

The climate is excessively hot. According to some, the sojourn of a single night at Rîha is often sufficient to occasion a fever. Indeed, in traversing the short distance of five or six hours from Jerusalem to Jericho, the traveller passes from a pure and temperate atmosphere into the sultry heat of an Egyptian climate. Nor is this surprising. The caldron of the Dead Sea, and this part of the Valley of the Jordan, lie thirteen hundred feet below the level of the ocean, and nearly three thousand feet lower than Jerusalem.

This great plain is partly desert, but it might easily be cultivated ; irrigation, with its climate, would produce abundance. Indeed, its fertility has been celebrated in every age. Josephus, whenever he has occasion to mention Jericho, rarely fails to break forth into praises of the richness and productiveness of its environs. He calls it the most fertile tract of Judæa ; pronounces it a “divine region ;” and, in speaking of the fountain—that, it is supposed, whose waters were healed by Elisha—says that it watered a tract seventy furlongs long by twenty broad, covered by beautiful gardens and groves of palms of various species. The Scriptures call Jericho the “city of palm trees ;”^{*} and Josephus everywhere describes these graceful trees, as here abundant and very large. But only one solitary palm tree lingers now in all the plain.

“Situated in the midst of this vast plain,” says Dr. Robinson, “Rîha reminded me much of an Egyptian village. . . . It is the most miserable and filthy that we saw in Palestine. The houses, or hovels, are merely four walls of stones, taken from ancient ruins, and loosely thrown together, with flat roofs of corn stalks or

^{*} The palm tree must at one time have been common in Palestine. In several coins of Vespasian, as well as of his son Titus, the land of Judæa is typified by a disconsolate woman, sitting under one of these trees, with the inscription, “*Judæa capta.*” The few palms that are now met with, at rare and distant intervals, are of no further service than, like the palm tree of Deborah, to shade the council of the sheikhs, or to supply the branches which, as in ancient days, may still be required for religious processions.

brushwood, spread over with gravel. They stand quite irregularly, and with large intervals, and each has around it a yard, inclosed by a hedge of the dry thorny boughs of the Nübk.* In many of these yards are open sheds, with similar roofs; the flocks and herds are brought into them at night, and render them filthy in the extreme. A similar, but stronger hedge of Nübk branches, surrounds the whole village, forming an almost insuperable barrier. The few gardens round about seemed to contain nothing but tobacco and cucumbers. The village was now full of people, in consequence of the influx of families from Taiyibeh to the harvest. . . . The proper inhabitants of Rîha were rated at about fifty men, or some two hundred souls; but the number had been diminished by the conscription. They are of the Ghawarineh, or inhabitants of the Ghôr, a mongrel race between the Bedawy and Hüdhy, disowned and despised by both. Here, indeed, they seemed too languid and indolent to do anything. Our sheikh spoke of them as hospitable and well-meaning people, but feeble and licentious."†

* The Nübk is the "*Spina Christi*" of botanists, supposed to be the shrub which afforded the crown worn by our Saviour before his crucifixion. It must have been very fit for the purpose, Hasselquist says, for it has many small sharp prickles, well adapted to give pain; and as the leaves greatly resemble those of ivy, it is not improbable that the enemies of our Lord chose it from its similarity to the plant with which emperors and generals were accustomed to be crowned, and hence that there might be insult and derision, meditated in the very act of punishment.

† Robinson's Researches, vol. ii. pp. 279, 280.

Amidst the many ruins scattered over the district, it was impossible to determine the spot on which the ancient Jericho stood. But "if we had not yet satisfied ourselves," says Dr. Robinson, "as to the site of the former Jericho, we had nevertheless been able to ascertain definitely in respect to her ancient neighbour Gilgal, that no trace either of its name or site remains. Indeed, it may be doubtful whether at first this name belonged to a city, though afterwards there can be little question that Gilgal was an inhabited place. It seems to have been early abandoned, for there is no certain trace of it after the exile, nor is it mentioned by Josephus as existing in his time."

The devout traveller will not fail to peruse at Rîha the Scripture accounts of Jericho, its remarkable destruction by Joshua, and the perpetual curse laid upon him who should attempt to rebuild its walls. He will think of that most beautiful of parables, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves," etc., and will not fail to be struck with the fact, that this journey is to this day one of the most dangerous in this land of dangers—the solitary and secluded road, shut in by mountain heights and savage crags, being one of the most favourite haunts of the robber. He will dwell particularly on the history of our Lord's visit to this place, when, on his last journey to Jerusalem, having traversed the country east of the Jordan, he passed

through Jericho, healing the blind, and honouring the house of Zaccheus with his presence. He will pay no respect to the tradition which marks the bold perpendicular hill Kūrüntül, (Quarantana,) which rises up behind the fountain to which the plain owes so much of its natural wealth, as the scene of our Lord's temptation. But he will feel, that it is not necessary to identify the exact scenes of events which have exercised the mightiest influence on the world, in order to awaken and fully to enjoy all the emotions which the region around is adapted to inspire. And happy will it be for him, if his heart beat a responsive welcome to that wondrous Voice from heaven, which was heard on the banks of the neighbouring Jordan, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

"Devotion, light thy purest fire;
Transport, on cherub-wing aspire;
Praise, wake to Him thy golden lyre.
Strike every thrilling cord;
While at the ark of mercy kneeling,
We own thy grace, reviving, healing,—
Redeemer! Lord!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD SEA.*

General impressions—Northern shore—Hills of Judæa and Moab—Deltas—Composition of hills—Mineral productions—Salt mountain—Salt pillar—Southern shore—The Wady El-Jeib—Night scene—Ascent of Akrabbim—The waters—Storm—Specific gravity—Taste—Analysis—Whence the saltiness—Life on, but not in, the sea—Vegetation—Apples of Sodom—Atmospherical effects—Unnatural stupor—Evaporation—Islands—Eddies—The cities of the plain—Peninsula—Zoar—Soundings—Wells of bitumen—Destruction of plain.

WE are now in the region of death—a land wherein the eye affects the heart, and makes it sad. The first impression produced by these waters, in their vast deep chasm, bounded on both sides by gigantic walls of precipitous mountains, is that of awe rather than pleasure. The scene is not lovely, but magnificently wild and stern. The sun may rise gloriously over the eastern hills, and penetrate the abyss below us, but the mind can hardly be diverted from the thought of that awful morning, when the sun arose on Sodom for the last time, and when Abraham, looking towards Sodom and

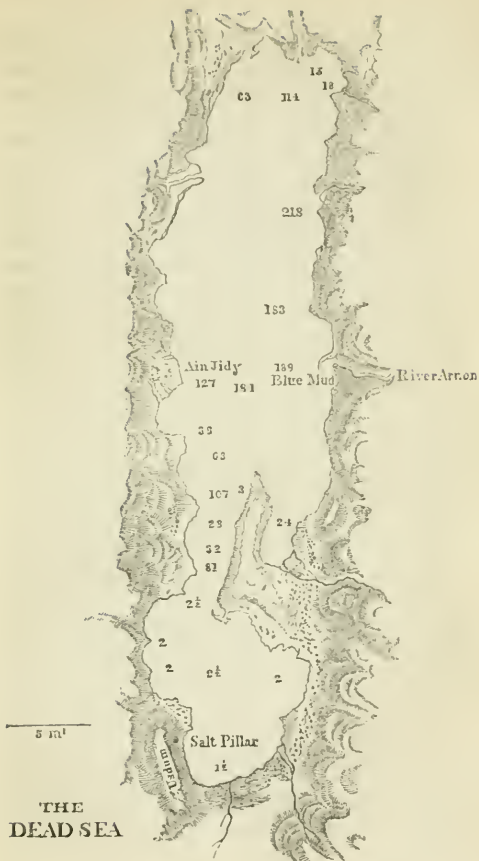
* Called also the Salt Sea, the Sea of Sodom, and the Asphaltic Lake.

Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. The moon may rise, and pour down its flood of silvery light on the surface of the sluggish waters, but we think involuntarily of the silence of the graves which have lain beneath them, submerged and undisturbed for more than seven-and-thirty centuries. The scene is one of unmixed desolation. Unstirred by the wind, the lake seems "a vast caldron of metal, fused, but motionless." Many desert places are passed through on the way from the Lake of Tiberias, but the living waters of the Jordan always provide for the eye something green and luxuriant to rest upon—

" But here, above, around, below,
In mountain or in glen,
Nor tree, nor plant, nor shrub, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power,
The wearied eye may ken ;
But all its rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone."

The northern shore of the sea through which the Jordan rolls,* is an extensive mud flat, the very type of desolation ; branches and banks of trees lying scattered in every direction, some charred and blackened as by fire, others white with an incrustation of salt. At the entrance of the Jordan, the Asphaltic Lake

* Lieutenant Lynch proceeded to the Dead Sea on the day of the Easter pilgrimage. He found the river in some places forty yards wide, and twelve feet deep ; in some, fifty yards wide, and eleven feet deep. At a short distance from the sea it was eighty yards wide, and seven feet deep ; and where it rolled its waters into the sea, it was one hundred and eighty yards wide, and three feet deep.





stretches out almost due south, with an average breadth of nine or ten miles, its length being about thirty-nine or forty geographical miles, or forty-five statute miles. It is bounded on the east by the mountains of Moab, which rise in frowning grandeur from bases which are dipped in the Salt Sea below. On the west, it is bounded by the eastern flank of "the hill country of Judæa," which presents to the sea a mountainous aspect, nearly as high, and quite as bold and rugged, as that which overlooks it on the east. These towering cliffs, on either side, belong respectively to the continuous ranges which extend southward from Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and form the eastern and western boundaries of the Valley of the Jordan; while the basin of the Dead Sea is the continuation of the valley itself, only depressed to a great depth at the point where the Jordan enters it, and so covered with water as to fill its whole extent and leave no plain at the foot of its mountain boundaries: and here these boundaries seem to frown defiance on each other across the sea, as used Moab and Judah to do of old, while they are stricken with barrenness by the salt waters which they hold in their bosom, and of which they seem as it were to stand in awe.

The mountains on the east and west of the sea are intersected with innumerable valleys and ravines, through one or two of which only flows a perennial stream, and through all of which flow down occasional mountain torrents, appear-

ing and disappearing as rapidly as the thunder-storm itself. At the mouth of every gorge, or wady, the stream which flows through it forms a delta, or small promontory, by the deposit of gravel and soil, and the effect, as exhibited on a large map, is very striking. It was one of the first things which attracted the attention of Dr. Robinson, who approached the sea over the western mountains above 'Ain Jidy. "One feature of the sea struck us immediately," he says, "which was unexpected to us; namely, the number of shoal-like points and peninsulas which run out into its southern part, appearing, at first sight, like flat sand-banks, or islands. Below us, on the south, were two such projecting banks on the western shore, composed, probably, of pebbles and gravel, extending out into the sea for a considerable distance. The larger and more important of these is on the south of the spot called Birket-el-Khülil, a little bay or indentation in the western precipice, where the water, flowing into shallow basins when it is high, evaporates and deposits salt."

The occasional notes of Lynch illustrate the composition and volcanic character of the hills. For example, near the Ain 'Turâbeh on the west, he writes: "Brown, incinerated hills, masses of conglomerate, banks of sand and dust impalpable as ashes, and innumerable boulders, blanched by long exposure to the sun." Near the Wady Mojob, or Arnon, on the east, he writes: "Stopped to examine some huge black boulders, lying confusedly upon the

shore, which proved to be trap, interspersed with tufa. The whole mountain, from base to summit, appeared one black mass of scoriæ and lava, the superposition of the layers giving them a singular appearance."

"The mineral productions around the sea," says Dr. Robinson, "have often been described. The body of the mountains is everywhere limestone. . . . I am not aware that the dark basaltic stones, so frequent around the Lake of Tiberias, have ever been discovered in this vicinity. There is, however, a black shining stone, found at the northern extremity of the sea, which partially ignites in the fire, and emits a bituminous smell.*. . . . It is used in Jerusalem for the manufacture of rosaries, and other little articles. Sulphur is found in various parts; we picked up pieces of it as large as a walnut, near the northern shore; and the Arabs said it was found in the sea near 'Ain-el-Feshkah, in lumps as large as a man's fist. They find it in sufficient quantities to make from it their own gunpowder. Near Usdum, we afterwards picked up small lumps of nitre. All these circumstances testify to the volcanic nature of the whole region; and this is also confirmed by the warm fountains of 'Ain Jidy and El-Feshkah on the west, and the hot sulphur springs of the ancient Callirhoë on the eastern coast."

The mountain of Usdum, connected, no doubt, with the volcanic character of the region,

* This is the "stink stone," described by many travellers.

and otherwise interesting, deserves special notice. It is a mountain of salt. Robinson saw it first from the hills above 'Ain Jidy, and says: "Towards the southern extremity of the sea, a long mountain was seen running out obliquely towards the south-south-east. This our Arabs called 'Hajr Usdum,' 'Stone of Sodom;' and said it was composed wholly of rock salt, too bitter to be fit for cooking, and only used sometimes as a medicine for sheep. The sea washes the base of this mountain, and terminates opposite to its south-east extremity, as here seen." On a subsequent occasion, Dr. Robinson visited the mountain. "The northern extremity of Usdum lies at some distance from the shore of the sea, and the space is covered with shrubs; but the flat shore soon trends towards it, and becomes narrower and wholly desert. All our present Arab guides gave to the mountain the name of Khashm Usdum; the former word signifying 'cartilage of the nose.' At 6^h. 10', a heap of stones lay between us and the shore, called Um Zôghal. Beyond this, the ridge of Usdum begins to exhibit more distinctly its peculiar formation, the whole body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock salt.

"The ridge is in general very uneven and rugged, varying from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet in height. It is, indeed, covered with layers of chalky limestone or marble, so as to present chiefly the appearance of common earth or rock; yet the mass of salt very commonly breaks out, and appears on the

sides in precipices forty or fifty feet high, and several hundred feet in length, pure crystallized fossil salt. We could at first hardly believe our eyes, until we had several times approached the precipices, and broken off pieces, to satisfy ourselves both by the touch and taste. The salt, where thus exposed, is everywhere, more or less, furrowed by the rains. As we advanced, large lumps and masses, broken off from the above, lay like rocks along the shore, or were fallen down as debris. The very stones beneath our feet were pure salt. This continued to be the character of the mountain, more or less distinctly marked, throughout its whole length, a distance of two and a half hours, or five geographical miles. The Arabs affirm that the western side of the ridge exhibits similar appearances. The lumps of salt are not transparent, but present a dark appearance, precisely similar to that of the large quantities of mineral salt which we afterwards saw at Varna, and in the towns along the lower Danube, the produce of the salt mines of those regions."

Dr. Robinson and his party penetrated into a cavern in the mountain. It was on a level with the ground, beneath a precipice of salt. The mouth was of an irregular form, ten or twelve feet high, and about the same in breadth. The interior of the cavern soon became a small irregular gallery, or fissure in the rock, with a water-course at the bottom, in which water was trickling. They followed this gallery with

lights, and with some difficulty, for three or four hundred feet into the heart of the mountain, to a point where it branched off into two smaller fissures. For this whole distance, the sides and roof and floor were solid salt, dirty indeed, and the floor covered with dust and earth; but along the water-course it was easy to remark the pure crystallized rock, as worn away by the torrent, which at times evidently rushed violently through the cavern.

One of the most interesting parts of this mountain seems to have escaped Dr. Robinson's notice. Lieutenant Lynch saw, on the eastern side of Usdum, one-third of the distance from the north extreme, a lofty round pillar, standing apparently detached from the general mass, at the head of a deep, narrow, and abrupt chasm. On landing to examine it, the beach was a soft, slimy mud, incrustated with salt, and, a short distance from the water, covered with saline fragments and flakes of bitumen. He found the pillar to be of solid salt, capped with carbonate of lime, cylindrical in front, and pyramidal behind. The upper or rounded part was about forty-three feet high, resting on a kind of oval pedestal, from forty to sixty feet above the level of the sea. It slightly decreased in size upwards, crumbled at the top, and was one entire mass of crystallization. A prop, or buttress, connected it with the mountain behind, and the whole was covered with debris of a light stone colour. Its peculiar shape was

regarded as attributable to the action of the winter rains.*

The position of Usdum, at the south end of the sea, enables us to ascertain the place of the "Valley of Salt," mentioned in Scripture, where the Hebrews, under David, and again under Amaziah, gained decisive victories over Edom. This valley could well have been no other than the saline and marshy plain south of the Dead Sea, and adjacent to the mountain of salt, and which separates the ancient territories of Judah and Edom. In this neighbourhood we should likewise probably look for "the city of salt," which is enumerated along with En-gedi, as in the desert of Judah. Strabo mentions, that "to the southward of the Dead Sea there were towns and cities built entirely of salt." And, strange though such a statement may seem, travellers who have contemplated the scene say it does not at all appear to them very improbable.†

* A similar pillar is mentioned by Josephus, who expresses his belief in its identity with that into which Lot's wife was transformed. His words are: "Lot's wife continually turning back to view the city as she went from it, and being too nicely inquisitive what would become of it, although God had forbidden her so to do, was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains to this day." Tertullian, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, have written strange things concerning this pillar, and it was long believed that as fast as any part of it was washed away, it was supernaturally renewed. Travellers have been much imposed on by the natives in their search after this "wonder." The judicial visitation for which Lot's wife is to be "remembered," took place on the eastern side of the sea, but the pillar on the western side, as seen and described by Lynch, is a "natural curiosity" of no small interest.

† The very remarkable mountain of Usdum is not mentioned, at least directly, either in Scripture or by Josephus,

The general character of the boundaries of the Dead Sea on the east and west has been described. The southern must now be examined. The valley, or Wady El-Arabah, connects the Dead Sea with the Gulf of Akabah, the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea, and is evidently the prolongation of the Valley of the Jordan; and on this ground the popular belief once was, that before the destruction of Sodom the Jordan, instead of losing itself in the Dead Sea, found its way through this great valley into the Red Sea. It is now ascertained, however, that the general elevation of the northern portion of the Wady El-Arabah, that nearest to the Dead Sea, must, if it were always the same, have interposed an insuperable barrier to the southward course of the stream. The waters, which have their origin in this portion of the wady, or which enter it from the neighbouring mountains on the east and west, instead of turning southward to the Red Sea, turn northward to the Dead Sea; and the water-shed, or dividing line, is supposed to be as far south as Wady Musa, fully one-half of the distance to the Red Sea.

or any other ancient writer. Galen probably alludes to it when, in speaking of the salt gathered around the Dead Sea, he remarks, that it is called "Sodom salt," from the mountains named Sodom adjacent to the lake; and the name Usdum is probably a traditional reminiscence, or an anagrammatic form of the name Sodom. So singular a feature did not escape the attention of the Crusaders. But after their time the whole tract around was forgotten, and remained unexplored for many years, till the veil of darkness was raised from the region in A.D. 1806, by Seetzen, who mentions the mountain's containing many layers of crystallized rock salt.

The plain immediately beyond the Dead Sea southwards, extends for ten or twelve miles before reaching the elevation just spoken of. The first part of it consists of a large tract of low, naked flats, in some parts a mere salt marsh, over which the sea rises, and which it covers when full. This naked tract lies chiefly to the west of the plain; and, indeed, all the western part, quite to the base of Usdum, is wholly without vegetation. Through the midst of it, in various places, large sluggish drains wind their way towards the sea. The eastern side of the plain presents a different appearance, is watered by two perennial streams from the south and south-east, and is covered with shrubs and verdure, like the plain of Jericho.

This plain is bounded on the south by a line of cliffs of chalky earth, or indurated marl, which, as seen from a distance, run obliquely quite across the broad valley, and, apparently, bar all further progress. Above and beyond these cliffs, the wide plain of the great valley runs on towards the south as far as the eye can reach. The cliffs themselves, varying in height in different parts from fifty to one hundred and fifty feet, are, indeed, nothing more than a *steppe* between the low ghor on the north, and the higher level of the more southern valley—the point of division, in fact, between the two portions of the one great valley, which is called El-Ghor northward to the Lake of Tiberias, and El-Arabah, southward to the Red Sea.

Dr. Robinson penetrated through these cliffs

into the southern region by the Wady El-Jeib. "To our surprise," he says, "this wady turned out to be, not the mere bed of a torrent descending from the higher plain of the 'Arabah, but a deep, broad wady issuing from the south upon the ghor, and coming down as far as the eye could reach between high precipitous cliffs. It is, indeed, the vast drain of all the 'Arabah, which has thus worn for itself, in the course of ages, a huge channel through the upper plain and the offset of cliffs to the level of the ghor below." The bed of the wady was very level, and bore traces of an immense volume of water, rushing along with violence, and covering its whole breadth. After travelling along this remarkable chasm for several hours, they halted in the shade of the western bank, opposite a gap in the eastern. "The evening," says Dr. Robinson, "was warm and still; we therefore did not pitch our tent, but spread our carpets on the sand, and lay down, not, indeed, at first to sleep, but to enjoy the scene, and the associations which thronged upon our minds. It was truly one of the most romantic desert scenes we had yet met with; and I hardly remember another, in all our wanderings, of which I retain a more lively impression. Here was the deep, broad valley, in the midst of the 'Arabah, unknown to all the civilized world, shut in by high and singular cliffs; over against us were the mountains of Edom; in the distance rose Mount Hor in its lone majesty, the spot where the aged prophet brothers took of each other

their last farewell ; while above our heads was the deep azure of an oriental sky, studded with innumerable stars and brilliant constellations, on which we gazed with a higher interest from the bottom of this deep chasm. Near at hand were the flashing fires of our party ; the Arabs themselves in their wild attire, all nine at supper around one bowl ; our Egyptian servants looking on, one after another rising and gliding through the glow of the fires ; the sheikh approaching and saluting us ; the serving of coffee ; and beyond all this circle, the patient camels lying at their ease, and lazily chewing the cud."

The learned traveller, who has thrown so much light on the geography of the region which we are now examining, was inclined to regard the line of cliffs through which the Wady El-Jeib descends to the Ghor as the "Ascent of Akrabbim," to which the south-eastern border of Judah was to be drawn from the Dead Sea, "from the bay that looketh southward," and was then to pass on to Zin and Kadesh-barnea.

We must now return to the Dead Sea, to examine its WATERS. Their surface lies 1,312 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. This is itself a singular phenomenon. The surface of all connected seas may be considered as having a perfectly equal level with respect to their mean elevation. The neighbouring Isthmus of Suez, indeed, is, from local causes, at different hours of the day, from twenty-four to

thirty feet above the Mediterranean. The level of inland seas is, however, determined by other causes. The largest inland sea in the world is the Caspian, being 760 miles in length and 278 in breadth. The level of its waters is between fifty and sixty feet lower than that of the ocean. This is but a slight approximation to the Dead Sea, whose peculiar depth must be traced to the formation of its basin, and the sustained proportion between the evaporation from its surface, and the quantity of waters which it receives.

We shall take our first impressions of this deep-lying lake from lieutenant Lynch's experience in a storm, which he encountered at the very outset of his investigations. A fresh north-west wind was blowing when he sailed out of the mouth of the Jordan. "The sea continued to rise with the increasing wind, which gradually freshened to a gale, and presented an agitated surface of foaming brine; the spray, evaporating as it fell, left incrustations of salt upon our clothes, our hands, and faces, and while it conveyed a pricking sensation wherever it touched the skin, was, above all, exceedingly painful to the eyes. The boats, heavily laden, struggled sluggishly at first; but when the wind freshened in its fierceness, from the density of the water, it seemed as if their bows were encountering the sledge hammers of the Titans, instead of the opposing waves of an angry sea." After half an hour's struggle, we "threw over some of the fresh water, to lighten

the Fanny Mason, which laboured very much, and I began to fear that both boats would founder. . . . At times, it seemed as if the dread Almighty frowned upon our efforts to navigate a sea, the creation of his wrath. There is a tradition among the Arabs, that no one can venture on this sea and live. . . . But, although the sea had assumed a threatening aspect, and the fretted mountains, sharp and incinerated, loomed terrific on either side, and salt and ashes mingled with its sands, and fœtid sulphurous springs trickled down its ravines, we did not despair; awe-struck, but not terrified; fearing the worst, yet hoping for the best—we prepared to spend a dreary night upon the dreariest waste we had ever seen." After being on the sea two hours and a half, "the wind instantaneously abated, and with it the sea as rapidly fell; the water, from its ponderous quality, settling as soon as the agitating cause had ceased to act. Within twenty minutes from the time we bore away from a sea which threatened to engulf us, we were pulling away at a rapid rate over a placid sheet of water, that scarcely rippled beneath us; and a rain cloud, which had enveloped the sterile mountains of the Arabian shore, lifted up, and left their rugged outlines basking in the light of the setting sun."*

The popular method of proving the specific

* Sudden winds and storms prevail much on the Dead Sea, as on all inland lakes surrounded by hills. Lieutenant Molyneux encountered several during the two days he spent on its bosom, and several times almost gave up all for lost. At the end of his brief voyage, "everything in the boat was

gravity of the water of the Dead Sea is by bathing in it—a feat of which travellers are no longer afraid, at least where their superstition does not beget the fear that such an act will neutralize the effects of their purification in the Jordan. “We stripped, and plunged ourselves into the waters,” says Dr. Wilson, “as soon as we reached them. We found them quite as buoyant as universal accounts led us to expect; and even one of the Messrs. Vaudrey, who had not ventured before to make the experiment of swimming, found himself able to float upon them like a block of wood.” “The water is exceedingly buoyant,” says Dr. Robinson. “Two of us bathed in the sea; and although I could never swim before, either in fresh or salt water, yet here I could sit, stand, lie, or swim in the water, without difficulty.”

Lynch made the same experiment in another form. “After sunset, we tried whether a horse and a donkey could swim in the sea without turning over. The result was, that although the animals turned a little on one side, they did not lose their balance. As Mr. Stephens tried

covered with a nasty slimy substance; iron was dreadfully corroded, and looked as if covered in patches with coal tar; and the effects of the salt spray, by lying upon the skin, and getting into the eyes, nose, and mouth, produced constant thirst and drowsiness, and took away all appetite.”—*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. xviii., 1848. Part ii., p. 128.

In the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the Lake Asphaltites is said to be “placed between two ranges of mountains, bold and craggy, and of the most majestic appearance, by which it is sheltered, so that, when the wind is blowing all around, it is perfectly calm, like a sheet of lead.” This idea has been dispelled by more correct and extensive observation.

his experiment earlier in the season, and nearer the north end of the sea, his horse could not have turned over from the greater density of the water there than here. His animal may have been weaker, or at the time more exhausted than ours. A muscular man floated nearly breast high, without the least exertion."

The same traveller makes the following statement: "Tried the relative density of the water of this sea and of the Atlantic—the latter from 25° north latitude, and 52° west longitude; distilled water being as 1. The water of the Atlantic was 1.02, and of this sea 1.13. The last dissolved $\frac{1}{11}$, the water of the Atlantic $\frac{1}{8}$, and distilled water $\frac{5}{7}$ [more than $\frac{1}{4}$, and less than $\frac{1}{3}$] of its weight of salt.* The salt used was a little damp. On leaving the Jordan we carefully noted the draught of the boats. With the same loads, they drew one inch less water when afloat upon this sea than in the river."

The testimony of travellers regarding the taste and general appearance of the water is uniform. "The water has a slight greenish hue," says Dr. Robinson, "and is not entirely transparent, but objects seen through it appear as if seen through oil. It is most intensely and intolerably salt, and leaves behind a nauseous, bitter taste." "Most of us," says Dr. Wilson, "made an inadvertent potation,

* Lieutenant Lynch's experiment disproves the statement, that common salt thrown into the Dead Sea will not be dissolved by it, but the exceeding *saltiness* of the water is seen in the comparatively small quantity of salt which it dissolves.

(when bathing,) as well as a philosophical tasting of the waters, and salt and acrid indeed we found them to be." "The saltiness of the water," says lord Nugent, "is intensely pungent to the tongue, and intolerably nauseous." "It is impossible," says the rev. G. Fisk, "to express the intensity of its nauseousness, when taken in sufficient quantity, and retained long enough to act upon the palate. It has two distinct flavours when first tasted, which soon unite, and make a most loathsome compound. The first is of extremely pungent saltiness, and capable of excoriating the palate. The other is sheer bitterness, and so bitter that it seems to penetrate the skin of the mouth. Though I took no more than about half a wine-glass full in my mouth, and did not swallow any, yet my palate was saturated with it, and the sensation remained during the day."

Of the seven analyses of the water of the Dead Sea which have been published, we give the first and the last—the former by Dr. Marcet, of London, in 1807, and the latter by Dr. Apjohn, of Dublin, in 1839. The amount of salts is in general nearly equal in all the analyses, but the relative proportions assigned to the different salts are exceedingly various, and are affected, in some measure, by the progress of chemical discovery. The standard of comparison for the specific gravity is distilled water at 1000; and the density of the water is supposed to be greater than that of any other natural water known.

| | <i>Dr. Marcet.</i> | <i>Dr. Apjohn.</i> |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Specific gravity | 1211 | 1153 |
| Muriate of Lime (Chloride of Calcium) | 3·920 | 2·438 |
| „ of Magnesia („ of Magnesium) | 10·246 | 7·370 |
| „ of Soda („ of Sodium) | 10·360 | 7·839 |
| Sulphate of Lime | 0·054 | 0·075 |
| Bromide of Magnesium | — | 0·201 |
| Chloride of Potassium | — | 0·852 |
| „ of Manganese | — | 0·005 |
| | 24·580 | 18·780 |
| Water | 75·420 | 81·220 |
| | 100 | 100 |

The water analysed by Dr. Apjohn was taken half a mile from the mouth of the Jordan, near the close of the rainy season; and this is enough to account for the circumstance, that his analysis exhibits a less amount of salts, and a less specific gravity, than occurs in any of the other analyses.

The “Edinburgh Philosophical Journal” for January—April, 1850, contains an analysis of the waters of the Dead Sea, by the Messrs. Herapath, of Bristol. The specimen on which these analysts experimented was collected by Mr. C. J. Monk, (son of the bishop of Gloucester,) on the 10th of March, 1849, near the north-western extremity of the lake, about half a mile from the spot where the Jordan enters, but quite apart from all direct influence arising from the stream of fresh water which flows into it. The water was perfectly clear and colourless, its taste was intensely bitter and nauseous, but it possessed no unpleasant odour. Its specific gravity, as determined by Dr. Apjohn, is 1·1530; as determined by the Messrs. Herapath, 1·17,205. The boiling point, as determined

by Dr. Apjohn, 221° ; by the Messrs. Herapath, 221.75° . In addition to the components detected by Dr. Apjohn, the Messrs. Herapath discovered traces of the chlorides of ammonium, aluminum, and iron, with silica and bitumen. They also found "unmistakable proofs of the existence of an abnormal proportion of organic matter."

The interesting question occurs at once—Whence the peculiar saltiness of the Dead Sea? In speaking of the salt mountain, Dr. Robinson says, "The existence of this immense mass of fossil salt, which, according to the latest geological views, is a frequent accompaniment of volcanic action, accounts sufficiently for the excessive saltiness of the Dead Sea. At this time, (May 29,) the waters of the lake did not indeed wash the base of the mountain, though they appear to do so on some occasions; but the rains of winter, and the streamlets which we still found running into the sea, would naturally carry into it, in the course of ages, a sufficiency of salt to produce most of the phenomena." It is admitted, that the salt of Usdum contains no peculiar ingredients—rendering it probable that the waters of the sea come somewhere into contact with other mineral masses. And if the presence of that mountain be not regarded as itself the cause of the saltiness of the sea, it indicates the probable existence of other local causes, some of them undiscovered, and from their position, perhaps, undiscoverable, which will sufficiently account for it.

The reader will expect to find the effects produced by these waters peculiar and powerful. Yet they are not all that they were at one time supposed to be. "As to the alleged destructive effect of the Dead Sea on birds flying over its surface," says lieutenant Molyneux, "we killed some which were actually standing in the water; and while in the very centre of the sea, I three times saw ducks, or some other fowl, fly past us within shot." Dr. Robinson saw pigeons shooting in rapid flight over the surface of the sea, and was no less surprised than delighted to hear, in the midst of the solitude and grandeur of 'Ain Jidy on its shore, the morning song of innumerable birds. "The trees, and rocks, and air around, were full of the carols of the lark, the cheerful whistle of the quail, the call of the partridge, and the warbling of many other feathered choristers; while birds of prey were soaring and screaming in front of the cliffs above." Lynch's testimony is to the same effect. The very first day he was on the sea, and in the midst of the storm which he then encountered, he saw three swallows and a gull; and he has frequent occasion to name the birds he observed flying over it or its shores, but intimates that all the birds, and most of the insects and animals which he noticed, were of a stone colour.

While the stories so long current of the pestiferous nature of the Dead Sea and its waters are thus proved to be mere fable, it is still true that nothing lives *in* it. "I saw no signs,"

says Molyneux, "of fish, or of any living thing in the waters, although there were many shells on the beach." In none of the shells discovered, however, has there been found life; and they have all been identified with fresh-water mollusca, so that they must have been carried into the Dead Sea by the Jordan and the mountain torrents on the east and west, and have gone thither only to perish. Its waters have been subjected to the microscope, but the tiny life of a single animalcule has not yet been discovered.

This is the more remarkable, as the ocean is supposed to possess greater riches of organic life than any other portion of the globe. Darwin remarks, that our forests do not conceal so many animals as the low woody regions of the ocean, where the sea wood, rooted to the bottom of the shoals, and the several branches of fuci, loosened by the force of the waves and currents, and swimming free, unfold their delicate foliage, upborne by air cells. "The application of the microscope," says Humboldt, "increases, in the most striking manner, our impression of the rich luxuriance of animal life in the ocean, and reveals to the astonished senses a consciousness of the universality of life. In the oceanic depths, far exceeding the height of our loftiest mountain chains, every stratum of water is animated with polygastric sea worms, cyclidiæ, and ophrydinæ. The waters swarm with countless hosts of small luminiferous animalcules, mammaria, (of the

order *Acalephæ*) crustacea, peridinea, and curling nereides, which, when attracted to the surface by peculiar meteorological conditions, convert every wave into a foaming band of flashing light. The abundance of these marine animals, and the animal matter yielded by their rapid decomposition, are so vast, that the sea-water itself becomes a nutrient fluid to many of the larger animals."

Compared with these facts, the Lake Asphaltites, with no organic life in its waters, may well be called the DEAD SEA.

The vegetation which is found on the shores of the lake is more significant of the character of the region than the entire absence of vegetation would be. The streams which come down through the hills are, of course, fringed with living green. But the efforts which nature puts forth to produce trees or shrubs on the shores of the sea are painfully abortive. Everything is shrunk and blighted, as by an ever-present curse.

There is one vegetable production connected with the sea we are visiting which we may notice here. After speaking of the conflagration of the plain, and the yet remaining tokens of the Divine fire, Josephus remarks, that there are still to be seen ashes reproduced in the fruits, which indeed resemble edible fruits in colour, but on being plucked with the hands, are dissolved into smoke and ashes." In this account, after a due allowance for the marvellous in all popular reports, there is nothing

which does not apply, almost literally, to the fruit of the 'Osher, which most travellers, since the time of Seetzen, (1806,) regard as that which produced the "apples of Sodom." "One of the first objects which attracted our notice on arriving at 'Ain Jidy," says Dr. Robinson, "was a tree with singular fruit, which, without knowing at the moment whether it had been observed by other travellers or not, instantly suggested to our minds the far-famed fruits

" which grew

Near that bituminous lake where Sodom stood."

This was the 'Osher of the Arabs, the *Asclepias gigantea vel procera* of botanists, which is found in abundance in Upper Egypt and Nubia, and also in Arabia Felix, but seems to be confined, in Palestine, to the borders of the Dead Sea. . . We saw here several trees of the kind, the trunks of which were six or eight inches in diameter, and the whole height from ten to fifteen feet. It has a greyish, cork-like bark, with long oval leaves, and in its general appearance and character it might be taken for a gigantic perennial species of the milk-weed, or silk-weed, found in the northern parts of the United States. Its leaves and flowers are very similar to those of the latter plant; and when broken off, it, in like manner, discharges copiously a milky fluid. The fruit greatly resembles, externally, a large smooth apple or orange, hanging in clusters of three or four together, and when ripe is of a yellow colour. It was now fair and delicious to the eye, and

soft to the touch ; but, on being pressed or struck, it explodes with a puff, like a bladder or puff ball, leaving in the hand only the shreds of the thin rind and a few fibres. It is, indeed, filled chiefly with air, like a bladder, which gives it the round form ; while, in the centre, a small slender pod runs through it from the stem, and is connected by thin filaments with the rind. The pod contains a small quantity of fine silk, with seeds, precisely like the pod of the silk-weed, though very much smaller, being indeed scarcely the tenth part as large. The Arabs collect the silk, and twist it into matches for their guns, preferring it to the common match, because it requires no sulphur to render it combustible."

The state of lieutenant Lynch's crew, on the twelfth day of their sojourn on the bosom and banks of the Red Sea, (being the twentieth since their departure from the Lake of Tiberias,) will illustrate the effects, if not of the water, yet of the excessive heat* to which they were subjected on its sunken shores. April 30 :—"Thus far all, with one exception, had enjoyed good health, but there were symptoms which caused me uneasiness. The figure of each one had assumed a dropsical appearance. The lean had become stout, and the stout almost corpulent ; the pale faces had become florid, and those which were florid, ruddy ; moreover,

* The thermometer was sometimes as low as 75° Fahr. ; but, in general, it ranged from 85° to 106° ; and at midnight it sometimes stood at 95°.

the slightest scratch festered, and the bodies of many of us were covered with small pustules. The men complained bitterly of the irritation of their sores, whenever the acrid water of the sea touched them. Still, all had good appetites, and I hoped for the best. There could be nothing pestilential in the atmosphere of the sea. There is little verdure upon its shores, and by consequence, but little vegetable decomposition to render the air impure; and the foetid smell we had frequently noticed, doubtless proceeded from the sulphur-impregnated thermal springs, which were not considered deleterious. Three times, it is true, we had picked up dead birds, but they, doubtless, had perished from exhaustion, and not from any malaria of the sea, which is perfectly inodorous, and more than any other abounds with saline exhalations, which, I believe, are considered wholesome."

All travellers tell us of the drowsiness and stupor, which long exposure to the atmosphere produces; but no one, except Lynch, has been in a position to give such a description as the following. It refers to the same day, April 30. They were crossing from the western shore to the mouth of the Arnon, the east:—

"The black chasms and rough peaks, embossed with grimness, were around and above us, veiled in a transparent mist, like visible air, that made them seem unreal; and thirteen hundred feet below, our sounding line had

struck upon the buried plain of Sodom,* shrouded in slime and salt.

“While busied with such thoughts, my companions had yielded to the oppressive drowsiness, and now lay before me in every attitude of a sleep, that had more of stupor in it than repose. In the awful aspect which this sea presented when we first beheld it, I seemed to read the inscription over the gates of Dante’s *Inferno* :—‘Ye who enter here, leave hope behind.’ Since then, habituated to mysterious appearances, in a journey so replete with them, and accustomed to scenes of deep and thrilling interest at every step of our progress, those feelings of awe had been insensibly lessened, or hushed by deep interest in the investigations we had pursued. But now, as I sat alone in my wakefulness, [at the helm,] the feeling of awe returned ; and as I looked upon the sleepers, I felt the hair of my flesh stand up, as Eliphaz’s did, when ‘a spirit passed before his face ;’ for, to my disturbed imagination, there was something fearful in the expression of their inflamed and swollen visages. The fierce angel of disease seemed hovering over them, and I read the forerunner of his presence in their flushed and feverish sleep. Some, with bodies bent, and arms dangling over the abandoned oars, their hands excoriated with the acrid water, slept profoundly ; others, with

* It is but right to say, that the seaman’s rhetoric is here in advance of his own conclusions. He does not himself decide, whether the plain of Siddim had extended so far north as the line over which he is now sailing.

heads thrown back, and lips cracked and sore, with a scarlet flush on either cheek, seemed overpowered by heat and weariness even in sleep ; while some, upon whose faces shone the reflected light from the water, looked ghastly, and dozed with a nervous twitching of the limbs, and now and then starting from their sleep, drank deeply from a breaker, and sank back again to lethargy. The solitude, the scene, my own thoughts, were too much ; I felt, as I sat thus, steering the drowsily moving boat, as if I were a Charon, ferrying not the souls, but the bodies of the departed and the damned, over some infernal lake, and could endure it no longer ; but, breaking from my listlessness, ordered the sails to be furled, and the oars to be resumed—action seemed better than such unnatural stupor." An excursion inland, and a day spent among the mountains of Moab, seem to have greatly restored the now enfeebled expedition.

Another effect of the water is illustrated by an entry in the next day's journal. May 1 : —"Overhauled the copper boat, which wore away rapidly in this briny sea. Such was the action of the fluid upon the metal, that the latter, as long as it was exposed to its immediate friction, was as bright as burnished gold, but whenever it came in contact with the air, it corroded immediately."

The evaporation from the Dead Sea is peculiarly observable. The day on which lord Nugent visited the sea was too resplendent, and

his lordship was too happy to allow him to carry away a gloomy impression of the scene. "But we observed," he says, "both in approaching and in leaving its shores, a haze or steam arising from it in the distance, certainly much more intense than any I have ever seen produced elsewhere by the heat of the air in the noon-day, and more resembling the heavy dew of the evening." "As we looked down from 'Ain Jidy upon the sea," says Dr. Robinson, "the sun rose in glory, diffusing a hue of gold upon the waters, now agitated by a strong ripple from the influence of an eastward breeze. We could perceive the dense evaporation rising and filling the whole chasm of the lake, and spreading itself as a thin haze above the tops of the mountains." Irby and Mangles, descending from Kerak, observed the effect of the evaporation arising from the sea, in broad transparent columns of vapour, not unlike water-spouts in appearance, but very much larger.

This evaporation, remarked by all travellers, accounts for some of those appearances which, in the imagination of ancient writers, clothed the lake with supernatural horrors ; but will it account for the consumption of the immense quantity of water which flows into it, without requiring the supposition of a subterranean outlet, either into the Red Sea or the Mediterranean ? Some still think that it will not. It has been calculated by Dr. Shaw, that the river Jordan discharges daily, upon an average,

6,090,000 tons of water into the Dead Sea ; in addition to which it receives large contributions from the Arnon and other streams. Lieutenant Lynch withholds his calculations, on the ground of the unavoidable uncertainty which attaches to all estimates of the kind. Calculations on the subject of evaporation are equally uncertain ; the amount of evaporation being dependent on the most variable causes, such as the average moisture of the atmosphere, the wind, and the general temperature. Though, at a given temperature and pressure, a certain amount of evaporation takes place from a certain area of water, yet the amount will vary with every degree of temperature, with every drop of moisture in the atmosphere, and with every breath of wind that agitates the surface. It is not, therefore, as containing a scientific solution which may be depended on, that we mention that, according to Dr. Halley's experiments, water, salted to the same degree as sea water, and exposed to a heat equal to that of a summer's day, evaporates at the rate of six ounces in twenty-four hours, from a circular surface of about eight inches in diameter,—whence he reckoned the evaporation from a square mile would equal 6,904 tons. This would give an evaporation of four millions for the area of the Dead Sea ; and making allowance for the additional evaporation produced by the furnace heat of the basin in which it lies, and by the frequent and powerful winds which agitate its bosom, we have probably a quantity quite equal to the

waters which, according to Dr. Shaw, flow into it. But more general ground is safer, and it is quite sufficient. "All the rivers* run into the sea, yet the sea is not full." If evaporation preserves the ocean from overflowing the land, may not the inland sea of which we are now writing, be kept within bounds by the same means? The Caspian has no outlet; and, though it is the reservoir of many rivers, (among which is the Volga, flowing two thousand seven hundred miles, and which has, with the exception of the Danube, the largest volume of water of any river in Europe,) it discharges all its superfluous waters apparently by means of evaporation. So, too, no doubt, does the Dead Sea. Its annual rise of from eight to fifteen feet, in consequence of the overflowings of the Jordan, is corroborative evidence that its waters escape in no other way.

Lieutenant Lynch says, he ascertained that there is no *ford* in the Dead Sea. The existence of a ford near the south end of the sea was first asserted by Seetzen, in the beginning of this century. His information was derived from Arabs, who said it was practicable only in summer, and required five hours for the passage. In Seetzen's map, this ford is laid down as leading from the peninsula to the northern part of Usdum. Irby and Mangles relate, that, in their descent from Kerak to the peninsula, they fell in with a small caravan going to Hebron by way of the ford; and while the travellers were examining the northern part of the peninsula,

this caravan crossed it to the strait, which they forded. The travellers soon after arrived at the same point, saw the ford indicated by boughs of trees, between the peninsula and the western shoal, or tongue of land, and observed the caravan just landed on the opposite side. The sheikh of the Jehâlîn affirmed to Dr. Robinson, that the water in the strait between the peninsula and the opposite shore was very deep, and never fordable; but further south, he said that he had himself forded the lake many years before, although now, and for several years past, the water was too deep to be forded. Lynch's sounding-line must be regarded as better evidence than the tales of Arabs; but his conclusion is irreconcilable with the actual observation of Irby and Mangles, except on the supposition, that on the occasion of their visit the waters were unusually low, or that the caravan which they saw crossed on a sand-bank, which has since disappeared.

Simple as the question seems—Are there islands in the Dead Sea?—it has been disputed even by those whose own eyes have been their informants and guides. When the water is low, it is admitted that an occasional sand-bank is exposed, especially on the shores of the southern extremity.* But are there islands properly so called? “Dr. Robinson and several other authors,” says Mr. Warburton, “state that

* “A little north of Sebbeh, we passed a long, low, gravelly island, left uncovered by the retrocession of the water.”—Lynch, p. 320.

there is no island in the whole expanse of the Dead Sea. I do not know how they could receive such an impression, for there, straight before me, at the distance of perhaps a mile, lay an island, of about three furlongs in length, very low, and apparently covered with ruins, or, at least, larger masses of stone than were visible anywhere in the neighbourhood."* Dr. Wilson likewise says, he "saw a small low island, which has vanished from all our maps since the publication of Dr. Robinson's great work." It was about an eighth of a mile in length. The stones upon it seemed to have the appearance, at a distance, of black basalt, or of broken bituminous limestone, much worn by water; and the question is naturally suggested, "Could they be floating masses of bitumen?"

Dr. Robinson's statement is its own defence, and the best solution of the difficulties felt by travellers. When descending the pass to 'Ain Jidy, he saw on the eastern shore what seemed a long dark-coloured shoal, or sand-bank. "On looking further, however," he says, "it proved to be a spot of calm, smooth water, around which the rest of the sea was covered with a ripple; and the dark brown eastern mountains being reflected in this mirror, gave to it their colour. Yet, for the moment, the illusion was complete, that a long dark yellow sand-bank, or island, lay before us." Irby and Mangles saw a similar appearance from the eastern mountains. "This evening, about sun-

* The Crescent and Cross, vol. ii. p. 230.

set, we were deceived by a dark shade on the sea, which assumed so exactly the appearance of an island, that we did not doubt of it, even after looking through a telescope." Lynch has settled this question in the negative, by his thorough navigation of the sea, but he saw frequent appearances of islands, which he ascribes to optical illusion. A striking instance which he records of the power of the refraction of light, may help to account for an illusion which occurs so frequently. "The Fanny Skinner, round the point, (of a gravelly bank,) seemed elevated above it. Her whole frame, from the surface of the water, was distinctly visible, although the land intervened." The statements we have quoted from Warburton and Wilson, Lynch ascribes to another source of mistake: "At 6^h 25', passed a gravelly point, with many large stones upon it. It is a peninsula, connected with the main by a low, narrow isthmus. When the latter is overflowed, the peninsula must present the appearance of an island, and is, doubtless, the one to which Stephens, Warburton, and Dr. Wilson allude."

Several travellers have remarked a strip of foam on the surface of the sea. "I must here mention," says Molyneux, "a curious broad strip of foam, which appeared to lie in a straight line, nearly north and south, throughout the whole length of the sea. It did not commence, as might be supposed, at the exit of the Jordan, but some miles to the westward, and it seemed to be constantly bubbling and in motion, like a

stream that runs rapidly through a lake of still water; while nearly over this white track, during both the nights we were on the water, we observed in the sky a white streak, like a cloud, extending also in a straight line from north to south, and as far as the eye could reach." Lynch has the following entry: "April 22.—Observed some branches of trees floating, about a mile from the shore, towards the north, confirming our impression of an eddy current." "April 23.—We again noticed a current, setting to the northward along the shore, and one further out, setting to the southward. The last was, no doubt, the impetus given by the Jordan, and the former its eddy, deflected by Usdum and the southern shore of the sea." In all this there is neither mystery nor difficulty. Currents and strips of foam are found in all lakes into which rivers flow from various directions.

Our last question is the most interesting—Where stood the cities of the plain? And this is connected with another—Is the Dead Sea the creation of the catastrophe which overwhelmed Sodom and Gomorrah, or did it exist before the occurrence of that event?

The reader will observe in the map a large peninsula on the east side, and towards the southern extremity of the lake. "It is a bold, broad promontory," says lieutenant Lynch,* "from forty to sixty feet high, with a sharp, angular, central ridge some twenty feet above

* Our quotation contains more than bears on the present question, but its information is too valuable to be omitted.

it, and a broad margin of sand at its foot, incrustated with salt and bitumen; the perpendicular face extending all round, and presenting the coarse and chalky appearance of recent carbonate of lime. There were myriads of dead locusts strewed upon the beach near the margin of the sea. The summit of the peninsula is irregular and rugged; in some places showing the tent-shape formation, in others a series of disjointed crags. . . . Dr. Anderson (who accompanied Mr. Lynch) describes the peninsula as a loose, calcareous marl, with incrustations of salt, and indications of sulphur, nitre, gypsum, marly clays, etc.; and the northern extremity as chalky with flints, the texture soft and crumbling. There were a few bushes, their stems partly buried in the water, and their leafless branches incrustated with salt, which sparkled as trees do at home when the sun shines upon them after a heavy sleet. . . . Near the immediate base of the cliffs was a line of drift wood, deposited by the sea at its full. Save the standing and prostrate dead trees, there was not a vestige of vegetation. The mind cannot conceive a more dreary scene, or an atmosphere more stifling and oppressive. The reverberation of heat and light from the chalk-like hills and the salt beach was almost insupportable. Walking up the beach, we saw the tracks of a hyena, and another animal which we did not recognise, and soon after the naked footprints of a man. To the eastward of the point is a deep bay, indenting the peninsula

from the north. We followed up an arched passage worn in the bank, and cutting steps in the salt on each side of the upper part, crawled through a large hole worn by the rains, and clambered up the steep side of the ridge to gain a view from the top. It presented a surface of sharp and angular points, light coloured, bare of vegetation, and blinding to the eye. We here collected many crystals of carbonate of lime. During our absence, the sailors had endeavoured to make a fire of the drift wood as a signal to the camp, but it was so impregnated with salt that it would not burn."

It is probably in the neighbourhood of this peninsula that the site of Zoar is to be found. That the ancient Zoar lay on the east side of the Dead Sea, seems evident from several considerations. The disgraceful parentage of Moab and Ammon is recorded, to account for the peopling of the eastern mountains by the Moabites and Ammonites. In that land, therefore, we must find the mountain residence of Lot and his daughters, which we know was in the neighbourhood of Zoar. Then we know that Zoar lay near and in sight of Sodom, and also in or adjacent to the plain, so as to be exposed to the same destruction as the other cities, as is apparent from Gen. xix. 19—21, where the angel exempts Zoar from overthrow at the intreaty of Lot. The Wady Kerak opens on the isthmus of the peninsula, and the conjecture of Irby and Mangles as to the character of the ruins they found there, agrees with all the

ancient notices of the site of Zoar, and is supported by the approval of later travellers. In the lower part of this valley, "there is," they say, "very clearly an ancient site; stones that have been used in building, though for the most part unhewn, are strewed over a great surface of uneven ground, and mixed both with bricks and pottery. This appearance continues without interruption during the space of at least half a mile, quite down to the plain, so that it would seem to be a place of considerable extent. We noticed one column, and we found a pretty specimen of antique variegated glass; it may possibly be the site of the ancient Zoar."

In this region, then, in the neighbourhood of the peninsula, we may look for the site of Sodom, for Zoar was "near to flee to."

A glance at our map will exhibit a singular difference of depth, between the portion of the sea which lies northward and that to which the peninsula belongs, and which lies southward of it. The former is deep,* the latter is shallow.

* Mr. Molyneux did not sail so far south as the peninsula. In one place, in the northern part of the sea, he says, "we paid out all the line, amounting to 225 fathoms, without feeling sure that the lead had reached the bottom; but it was no easy task to haul it up again, so insufferable was the heat. . . . When the lead was up, found some pieces of clear rock salt adhering to the arming." He records two other soundings, of 178 and 183 fathoms, when the lead brought up a quantity of dark clay or mud. Lynch's soundings were very exact and extensive, and his map exhibits such series of soundings as the following, in lines across the expanse of the sea:—

First, 3 . 5 . 17 . 20 . 63 . 110 . 116 . 114 . 113 . 105 . 95 . 91 . 87
19 . 18.

Second, 6 . 12 . 23 . 120 . 156 . 173 . 184 . 185 . 213 . 190 . 184 .
175 . 23.

Third, 30 . 73 . 127 . 115 . 155 . 161 . 176 . 154 . 187 . 188 . 187 .
184 . 171 . 141 . 34.

In the former, the soundings show a depth of two hundred and thirteen fathoms ; in the latter, the sea suddenly shallows to a depth of one and two fathoms, and resembles much the winding estuary of a large river. The bottom of the Dead Sea thus consists of two submerged plains, a depressed and an elevated one, "the last averaging thirteen, the former about thirteen hundred feet below the surface." The inference presents itself involuntarily, that the northern part of the sea is more ancient than the southern, and that the portion covered by the southern is the submerged vale of Siddim, where stood the cities of the plain, and whose natural wealth and beauty tempted the eye of Lot, when Abraham and he gazed upon it from the hills of Judæa. The Wady El-Jeib, coming down from the Ascent of Akrabbim on the south, would then terminate not at what is now the southern extremity of the sea, but where the sea now so suddenly and singularly deepens near the peninsula ; and the waters which flow down through that wady, and other valleys in the south-eastern mountains, would enrich the vale of Siddim, and make it all that it is represented to have been. There is an entry in Lynch's journal, very unimportant in appearance, which, perhaps, if we could obtain fuller information, would have an important bearing on this question. "At 11, the patent

As a specimen of the portion of the lake south of the peninsula, the following may be taken :—

2. 2½. 2. 2. 2. 1½. 1½.

log had marked $2\frac{7}{8}$ knots ; depth, six feet ; bottom, soft brown mud ; made for a current ripple, a little further out, coloured with decomposed wood, membranes of leaves, chaff, etc. ; depth, thirteen fathoms ; hard bottom ; resumed the course along the shore." May not the sudden depth with hard bottom, underneath the ripple which attracted them to the spot, indicate the rocky channel, through which the confluent waters of the vale of Siddim poured themselves into the ancient sea ?

The conformation of the Wady El-Arabah, where it bounds the plain on the south of the Dead Sea, renders it apparently impossible, as we have already seen, for the Jordan ever to have pursued its course southward to the Elanitic Gulf. And thus "every circumstance," says Dr. Robinson, "goes to show that a lake must have existed in this place, into which the Jordan poured its waters, long before the catastrophe of Sodom." The great depression of the whole broad Jordan valley, and of the northern part of the Arabah, the direction of its lateral valleys, as well as the slope of the high western desert towards the north, all indicate that the configuration of this region, in its main features, is coeval with the present condition of the surface of the earth in general, and not the effect of any local catastrophe at any subsequent period."

The historical account of the destruction of Sodom reads thus : "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire

from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground," Gen. xix. 24, 25. These words clearly state a direct Divine agency to have been put forth for the awful purpose of retribution. It is very possible that its effects were increased and extended by the ignition of the masses of asphaltum accumulated around the slime pits.

"The vale of Siddim was full of slime pits," we are told. These were wells of bitumen, or asphaltum, and they appear to have been of considerable extent.* They are probably still

* We have already found bitumen wells at the northern extremity of the land. The account we have of the "Pitch Lake," in the Island of Trinidad, illustrates several points so well that we need offer no apology for a long note. "We soon after," says Dr. Nugent, "had a view of the lake, which, at first sight, appeared to be an expanse of still water, frequently interrupted by clumps of dwarf trees, or islets of rushes and shrubs; but on a nearer approach we found it to be in reality an extensive plain of mineral pitch, with frequent crevices and chasms, filled with water. The singularity of the scene was altogether so great, that it was some time before I could recover from my surprise, so as to investigate it minutely. The surface of the lake is of the colour of ashes, and, at this season, was not polished or smooth, so as to be slippery; the hardness or consistence was such as to bear any weight, and, it was not adhesive, though it partially received the impression of the foot; it bore us without any tremulous motion whatever, and several head of cattle were browsing on it in perfect security. In the dry season, however, the surface is much more yielding, and must be in a state approaching to fluidity, as is shown by pieces of recent wood, and other substances, being enveloped in it. Even large branches of trees, which were a foot above the level, had, in some way, become enveloped in the bituminous matter.

"The interstices, or chasms, are very numerous, ramifying and joining in every direction; and, in the wet season, being filled with water, present the only obstacle to walking over the surface. These cavities are generally deep in proportion to their width, some being only a few inches in depth, others

in existence. Josephus says, that "the sea in many places sends up masses of asphaltum, which float on the surface, having the form and size of headless oxen." Diodorus Siculus also relates, that the bitumen is thrown up in masses, covering sometimes two or three plethra,* and having the appearance of islands. The Arabs who accompanied Dr. Robinson believed that it appears only after earthquakes. They related that, after the earthquake of 1834, a large quantity of asphaltum was cast upon the shore near the south-west part of the sea, of which the Jehâlîn brought about six thousand

several feet, and many almost unfathomable. The water in them is good, and uncontaminated by the pitch. The people of the neighbourhood derive their supply from this source, and refresh themselves by bathing in it. Fish are caught in it, and particularly a very good species of mullet. It is not easy to state precisely the extent of this great collection of pitch; the line between it and the neighbouring soil is not always well defined; and, indeed, it appears to form the substratum of the surrounding tract of land. The depth cannot be ascertained, and no subjacent rock or soil can be discovered. Where the bitumen is slightly covered by soil there are plantations of cassava, plantains, and pine-apples, the last of which grow with luxuriance, and attain to great perfection. In some parts, it is so hard as to require a severe blow of the hammer to detach or break it. In other parts, it is so much softer as to allow one to cut out a piece in any form with a spade or hatchet; and in the interior is vesicular and oily: this is the character of by far the greater portion of the whole mass. In one place it bubbles up in a perfectly fluid state, so that you may take it up in a cup. And I am informed that, in one of the neighbouring plantations, there is a spot where it is of a bright colour, shining, transparent, and brittle, like bottle glass or resin. The odour in all these instances is strong, and like that of a combination of pitch and sulphur. A bit of the pitch, held in the candle, melts like sealing wax, and burns with a light flame, which is extinguished whenever it is removed, and on cooling the bitumen hardens again." — *Transactions of the Royal Geological Society*, 1811.

* A plethron is one hundred feet.

pounds into market. After the earthquake of January 1st, 1837, a large mass of bitumen (one said like an island, another like a house) was discovered floating on the sea, and was driven aground on the west side, not far to the north of Usdum. The Jehâlîn and the inhabitants of Yûtta swam off to it, and cut it up with axes, so as to bring it ashore. The Ta'Amirah heard of it, and went to get a share. They found seventy men already upon and around it. This mass of bitumen was carried off by camel loads. It is only in the southern part of the sea, so far as our information goes, that bitumen is found.

These facts go to prove that there are still sources of bitumen in that region. But the shores have been searched for them in vain; and the conclusion is unavoidable, that they are in the submerged plain. The probability is, that the bitumen flows from concealed fountains, and is spread like lava over the surrounding sea bottom, from which it is detached in masses by those earthquakes, after which alone it appears floating on the surface.

There seems to be no improbability in supposing, that the raining down of fire from heaven, which destroyed the vale and "that which grew upon it," may have been accompanied or followed by convulsions of the earth, whereby the plain was depressed, or the bottom of the sea, already existing on the north, slightly heaved up, so that the sea would rush southward, and convert a fertile country into a

tract of water, and make the entire region what it now is. The subsequent barrenness of the portion of the plain which was not submerged, and which we have already described as lying between the extremity of the sea and the Wady El-Arabah, is sufficiently "accounted for by the presence of such masses of fossil salt, which perhaps were brought to light only at the same time." These "views and suggestions are not the result of mere conjecture, but rest upon a basis of facts and analogies, supplied by the researches of science."

In his summing up, Lynch, who, in the course of his observations, vacillates between one opinion and another, inclines to the belief that the entire sea was produced by the convulsion which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The general impression, however, which himself and his companions received, is independent of this particular conclusion. "It is for the learned," he says, "to comment on the facts we have laboriously collected. Upon ourselves the result is a decided one. We entered this sea with conflicting opinions. One of the party was sceptical, and another, I think, a professed unbeliever of the Mosaic account. After twenty-two days' close investigation, if I am not mistaken, we are unanimous in the conviction of the truth of the Scriptural account of the destruction of the cities of the plain."

"Yes, on that plain by wild waves covered now,
Rose palace once, and sparkling pinnacle;
On pomp and spectacle beamed morning's glow,
On pomp and festival the twilight fell.

Lovely and splendid all—but Sodom's soul
Was stained with blood, and pride, and perjury ;
Long warned, long spared, till her whole heart was foul,
And fiery vengeance on its clouds came nigh.

They rush, they bound, they howl, the men of sin—
Still stooped the cloud, still burst the thicker blaze ;
The earthquake heaved ! then sank the hideous din !
Yon wave of darkness o'er their ashes strays."

But these events are of ancient date, and men are prone to imagine that God takes less interest, and a less active part in the affairs of men now, than he did in the times to which Bible history refers. This is a great mistake. The design of those immediate interventions which are recorded in Holy Writ, was to illustrate in palpable forms the fact of God's rule among men, and the principles of his government. This lesson, once sufficiently taught and recorded, that mode of instruction ceased. But the facts continue as they were ; God still rules, and his reign is righteous. By his will nations rise and nations fall. The hour of their fall may not be revealed by a Divine handwriting on the wall, nor may their doom be executed by supernatural fires or waters. But the Divine will and the Divine power are not the less really exercised in the event, because their presence is not indicated by outward signs.

These principles deeply concern every nation under heaven. The petty states of Sodom and Gomorrah are beacons to the mightiest empires. Their sites, buried beneath the waters of wrath, may not be surveyed, nor the peculiarities of their civilization brought to light, but the sad

story of their overthrow forms one of the most monitory annals of mankind. The warning is not the less fresh and powerful because it is old. An English poet saw its point, and sounded it in the ears of his countrymen more than half a century ago. And time has deprived his apostrophe to the English metropolis of none of its appropriateness. There are still the same features of dark depravity ; and still, blessed be God, the same reasons for comfort and hope.

“ Oh ! Thou, resort and mart of all the earth,
Chequered with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes ; in whom I see
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor
Ten righteous would have saved a city once,
And thou hast many righteous—well for thee,
That salt preserves thee ; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious, at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had power to be,
For whom God heard his Abraham plead in vain.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENVIRONS OF THE DEAD SEA.

Guides—An Arab encampment—Churning—Grinding—Terraces—Cisterns—Plucking ears of corn—Mar Saba—Coneys found—Frank mountain—Cave of Adullam—Essenes—Tekoa—Ancient sites—David and Nabal—En-ge-di—Fortress of Masada—Tragedy—The Wady Kerak—Storm—Kir Moab—Ar—Arnon—Zerka Main—Callirhoe—Mount Nebo—Hopes.

THERE are points and places of deep interest in the environs of the Dead Sea, which could not be noticed in the preceding chapter, without involving us in too many digressions. To some of these we now invite attention. The general character of the country has already been indicated. Lofty and rugged as are the mountains of Judah on the west, and of Moab on the east, they were peopled in very early ages, and are partially peopled still. But the people, with very limited exceptions, belong to that wide-spread race, which has its hands against every man, and whose life is one of constant robbery and violence. And would the traveller proceed on his journey in safety, he will find his best guards and guides in the most desperate and successful robbers. Such, for example, would be sheikh Mustafa, the

head of a wandering tribe of half Derwishes, who frequent the neighbourhood of Jericho; or the sheikh of the Ta 'Amirah, a tribe of Arabs, living south-east of Bethlehem, towards the Dead Sea, who occupy a sort of border ground between the Bedawîn and Fellahîn—between the wandering tenants of the desert, who dwell only in tents, and the more fixed inhabitants of the villages—and who are noted as being among the foremost on occasions of rebellion and robbery. The present sheikh of the Ta 'Amirah is described as a noble-looking man, something more than a common Arab. His countenance is intelligent, with a mild and pensive cast. He is the Khatîb, or orator, and Imâm of his tribe, and can read and write. But for this accomplishment of their chief, the Ta 'Amirah stand degraded in the eyes of their brethren. He is not, however, the less brave, and, if satisfied with a sufficient number of piastres, he will fulfil his contract honourably.

We shall not proceed along the shores of the sea, nor shall we travel so far west as the line which passes through Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron. The circumstances observed on a visit to the encampment of the Ta 'Amirah will illustrate both ancient and modern manners. As early as four o'clock, A.M., everything is in motion. There are about six hundred sheep and goats, and the process of milking is already going on. They have few cows. There are six tents arranged in a sort of square; they are made of black hair cloth, not large, and

are mostly open at one end and on the sides, the latter being turned up. The tents form the common rendezvous of men, women, and children, calves, lambs, and kids. The women are without veils, and seem to make nothing of the presence of strangers. The various processes in the housekeeping of nomadic life are before us. The women in some of the tents are kneading bread, and baking it in thin cakes in the embers, or on iron plates over the fire. One female is churning milk in a very primitive way. The churn consists of a common water-skin, that is, the tanned skin of a goat, stripped off whole, and the extremities sewed up. This is partly filled with the milk, and being then suspended in a light frame, or between two sticks leaning against the tent or house, it is regularly moved to and fro with a jerk, until the process is completed. Another woman is kneeling, and grinding at the hand-mill. These mills are, doubtless, those of Scriptural times, and are similar to the Scottish *quern*. They consist of two stones, about eighteen inches or two feet in diameter, lying one upon the other, with a slight convexity between them, and a hole through the upper to receive the grain. The lower stone is fixed, sometimes in a sort of cement, which rises around it like a bowl, and receives the meal as it falls from the stones. The upper stone is turned upon the lower by means of an upright stick, fixed in it as a handle. These mills are wrought by women only, sometimes one alone,

and sometimes two together. The female kneels or sits at her task, and turns the mill with both hands, feeding it occasionally with one. The labour is hard, and the grating sound of the mill is heard at a distance, indicating the presence of a family and of household life.*

There are not in this region primitive forests to impede the traveller's progress, and the occurrence of an oasis, on which the eye will delight to rest, is very rare. Level spots, however, are sometimes to be met with, covered with barley or millet. Olive trees and small vineyards appear occasionally. In some parts, the valleys and the sides of the hills are sprinkled, and sometimes covered with arbutus, dwarf oaks, small firs, and other bushes. "Even in those parts where all is now desolate, there are everywhere traces of the hand of the men of other days; . . . terraces, walls, stones gathered along the paths, frequent cisterns, and the like. Most of the hills, indeed, exhibit the remains of terraces built up around them, the undoubted signs of former cultivation."†

Cisterns excavated in the solid rock are sometimes to be met with. "Broken cisterns which hold no water," are not infrequent. But there are many entire, and over them is laid a broad and thick flat stone, with a round

* "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left," Matt. xxiv. 41. "Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle," Jer. xxv. 10.—Robinson, vol. ii. 181.

† Robinson, ii. 187.

hole cut in the middle, forming the mouth of the cistern. This hole is itself covered in many cases with a heavy stone, which it would require two or three men to roll away.*

If any fields of wheat ripening in the sun should be passed, and the Arabs should be "an hungered," they will pluck the ears of corn, and eat, rubbing them in their hands. On being questioned, they say it is an old custom, and no one will speak against it; they are supposed to be hungry, and it is allowed as a charity.

The first place which claims our notice is Mar Saba, the convent of St. Sabas, founded in the fifth century. It is equi-distant from the Dead Sea, from Jerusalem, and from Bethlehem—about three hours from each of them. The mountain on which it stands forms the side of the Wady Er-Rahib, the continuation of the brook Kidron, which, under this name, extends from the point of junction with the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom to the Dead Sea. The convent "consists of a congeries of erections, of different levels, of various forms, and of unequal altitude, the highest of them being a watch tower, and a tower of defence against the Arabs." The ravine below is deep and wild. "The rocks of the chasm, with their numerous caverns, in which the hermits of old were

* "A great stone was upon the well's mouth. And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place," Gen. xxix. 2, 3.

accommodated, form a kind of Petra in miniature."

The Wady Er-Rahib itself is "deep, romantic, and desolate throughout, and being that which leads from behind the site of the temple at Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, one cannot resist the conclusion, that it was the locality before the eye of the prophet Ezekiel, when he describes the vision of the holy waters, as with increasing strength, and depth, and fructifying power, they issue out [of the sanctuary] towards the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed." The other local references of this prophecy (Ezek. xlvii. 8—12) give to this conclusion a character of certainty.

When exploring the rocks in the neighbourhood of the convent, Dr. Wilson and his friends saw a family or two of the wubar, engaged in their gambols on the heights above them. They watched them narrowly, and were much amused with the liveliness of their motions, and the quickness of their retreat within the clefts of the rock when they apprehended danger. They are the first European travellers who have actually noticed this animal, now universally admitted to be the shaphan or coney of Scripture, within the proper bounds of the Holy Land. On a second visit to Mar Saba, in company with the rev. Ridley H. Herschell and others, Dr. W. directed attention to this fact. "We climbed up," says Mr. Herschell, "to see its

nest, which was a hole in the rock, comfortably lined with moss and feathers, answering to the description given of the coney in Psalm civ. 18, and Prov. xxx. 26."

From Mar Saba to the "Frank mountain" is a distance, in a direct line south-west, of about eight miles. Its present name is known only among the Franks, and is founded on a tradition, which is more than doubtful, that this post was maintained by the Crusaders for forty years after the fall of Jerusalem. "More probable," says Dr. Robinson, "is the suggestion, that this spot is the site of the fortress and city Herodium, erected by Herod the Great. According to Josephus, that place was situated about sixty stadia from Jerusalem, and not far from Tekoa. Here, on a hill of moderate height, and which he raised still higher, or at least fashioned by artificial means, Herod erected a fortress, with round towers, having in it royal apartments, of great strength and splendour. The difficult ascent was overcome by a flight of two hundred steps of hewn stone. At the foot of the mountain, he built other palaces, for himself and his friends, and caused water to be brought thither from a distance, in large quantity, and at great expense. The whole plain around was also covered with buildings, forming a large city, of which the hill and fortress constituted the Acropolis. . . . To the same place apparently the body of Herod was brought for burial, two hundred furlongs (perhaps circuitously by Jerusalem) from

Jericho, where he died. All these particulars, the situation, the mountain, the round towers, the large reservoir of water, and the city below, correspond very strikingly to the present state of the Frank mountain, and leave scarcely a doubt that this was Herodium, where the Idumæan tyrant sought his last repose." It is not improbable, that on the site of Herodium had stood, at an earlier period, the Beth-hacerem of the prophet Jeremiah, where the children of Benjamin were to "set up a sign of fire," while they blew the trumpet in Tekoa, for Tekoa is but a few miles distant from the Frank mountain.

In half an hour south-east from the ruins of Herodium, is a narrow picturesque gorge, with high precipitous walls upon each side. High up on the southern side are the remains of a square tower and village, called Khûreitûn, which gives its name to the wady in its eastern extension to the Dead Sea. On the same side, among the rocks, is an immense natural cavern, which runs in by a long, winding, narrow passage, with small chambers or cavities on either side. Captains Irby and Mangles entered it, and soon came to a large chamber, with natural arches of a great height; from this chamber there were numerous passages, leading in all directions, occasionally joined by others at right angles, and forming a perfect labyrinth, which the Arabs say has never been explored, the people being afraid of losing themselves. The passages are generally four feet high by three feet wide, and

are all on a level with each other. A few petrifications are to be met with ; nevertheless, the grotto is perfectly clear, and the air pure and good.

This remarkable cavern is regarded in monastic tradition as the cave of Adullam, in which David took refuge after leaving Gath of the Philistines, when "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him ; and he became a captain over them : and there were with him about four hundred men," 1 Sam. xxii. 2. The city of Adullam was one of the cities of "the valley," or the plain between the hill country of Judah and the Mediterranean ; and from its place in the lists of names, it appears not to have been far from the Philistine city of Gath. This circumstance would suggest, that the cave of Adullam was near the city of that name. But there is no passage of Scripture which connects the city and the cave, and it is certainly not in a plain that one would look for a cave capable of affording a secure retreat to four hundred men, nor has any such cave been found in that quarter. Western names are reproduced in several instances in the mountainous wilderness towards the Dead Sea, (Carmel, for instance,) and we know that the usual haunts of David were in this neighbourhood, whence he could easily send his father and his mother into the land of Moab, on the east of the Dead Sea ; whereas, they must have crossed the whole

breadth of the land, if the cave of Adullam had been near the city of that name.* These considerations do not enable us to identify the cave of Adullam, but they lead to the conclusion, that it was in this region.

This is, indeed, a land of caves ; and these natural habitations have afforded shelter to very different classes of men. Two centuries before the birth of Christ, the monks of Judaism, the Essenes, sought refuge in the solitudes of this region from the corruptions, the storms, and conflicts of the world—"a race," says the elder Pliny, "entirely by themselves, and beyond every other in the world deserving of wonder ; men living in communion with nature, without wives, without money. Every day their number is replenished by a new troop of settlers, since they are much visited by those whom the reverses of fortune have driven, tired of the world, to their modes of living. Thus happens, what might seem incredible, that a community in which no one is born, yet continues to subsist through the lapse of centuries—so fruitful for them is disgust of life in others." In a later age, these "dens and caves of the earth" afforded shelter to Christian refugees from the cruel sword of persecution. And they are now, in many instances, the dwellings of a scattered peasantry, who herd their flocks and till their patches of land amidst constant fear and insecurity.

In two hours from the cave in the Wady

* See Pictorial Bible on Josh. xii. 15, and 1 Sam. xxii. 1

Khūreitūn lies 'Tekû'a, on an elevated hill, not steep, but broad on the top, and covered with ruins to the extent of four or five acres. 'These are the remains of the 'Tekoa of the Old Testament, whence Joab called the wise woman to plead in behalf of Absalom; and which, fortified by Rehoboam, was afterwards the birth-place of the herdsman-prophet Amos, and gave its name also to the adjacent desert on the east. In the eighth century, it had a Christian church, and in the time of the Crusades it was still inhabited by Christians. In A.D. 1138, Tekoa was sacked by a party of 'Turks from beyond the Jordan; but the inhabitants had mostly taken refuge in the cavern above described, and which was regarded at that time as the cave of Adullam.

In a direct line southward we can identify the sites of many of the ancient cities of the mountains of Judah. Ma'in is, without doubt, the Maon of Nabal. Semû'a probably corresponds to the ancient Eshtemoa. Attir suggests the Jattir of Scripture. 'Anâb is, of course, the ancient name, Anab, without change; and in Shuweikeh, the diminutive form of Shaukeh, we may recognise the Socoh of the mountains of Judah. In Yūtta and Kurmul we have the Juttah and Carmel of antiquity; not the Carmel to which Elijah summoned the prophets of Baal, but the Carmel where Saul set up the trophy of his victory over Amalek; and where Nabal was shearing his sheep, when the affair took place between

him and David, in which Abigail bore so conspicuous a part. The ruins of Zîf, the Ziph of the Old Testament, can be traced in broken walls and foundations, most of them of unhewn stones, but indicating solidity, and covering a considerable tract of ground. We are here in the midst of scenes, memorable of old for the adventures of David during his wanderings, in order to escape from the jealousy of Saul. Ziph and Maon gave their names to the desert on the east, as did also En-gedi; and twice did the inhabitants of Ziph attempt to betray the youthful outlaw to the vengeance of his persecutor. At that time David and his men appear to have been very much in the condition of similar outlaws at the present day. They lurked in these deserts, associating with the herdsmen and shepherds of Nabal and others, and doing them good offices, probably in return for information and supplies received through them. Hence, when Nabal held his annual sheep-shearing in Carmel, David felt himself entitled to share in the festival, and sent a message, recounting his own services, and asking for a present: "Wherefore, let the young men find favour in thine eyes; for we come in a good day; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David." "In all these particulars," says Dr. Robinson, "we were struck with the truth and strength of the Biblical descriptions of manners and customs, almost identically the same as they exist at the present

day. On such a festive occasion, near a town or village, even in our own time, an Arab sheikh of the neighbouring desert would hardly fail to put in a word, either in person or by message; and his message, both in form and substance, would be only the transcript of that of David."

We shall now notice 'Ain-Jidy, the ancient En-gedi, already mentioned, but whose associations have not been adverted to. In a few hours from Kurmul, over defiles and along narrow ravines, in which gazelles, and jackals, and bedens, or mountain goats, are occasionally seen, the traveller finds himself in the "wilderness of En-gedi," where David and his men lived among "the rocks of the wild goats;" and where the former cut off the skirts of Saul's robe in a cave. The whole Scriptural scene, travellers inform us, is drawn to the life.

The descent down the declivity of the eastern slope passes sensibly through different climes, till, in the chasm of the sea, an Egyptian climate and Egyptian productions are encountered. The path from the cliff, from which the first full view of the Dead Sea is obtained, leads down a terrific pass, and is carried partly along ledges or shelves on the perpendicular face of the cliff, and then down the almost equally steep debris. Much of the rock is a reddish, or rose-coloured limestone, smooth as glass, yet with an irregular surface. Looking upon it from below, it seems impossible that any road can exist there; yet, by a skilful application of zigzags,

the path is so constructed, that even loaded camels often pass up and down. "My companion," says Dr. Robinson, "had crossed the heights of Lebanon and the mountains of Persia; and I had formerly traversed the whole of the Swiss Alps; yet neither of us had ever met with a pass so difficult and dangerous. Of those which I had seen, that of the Gemmi resembles it most, but is not so high, and the path is better."

After a perilous descent of forty-five minutes, Dr. Robinson found the beautiful fountain, 'Ain-Jidy, bursting forth at once a fine stream, upon a sort of narrow terrace or shelf of the mountain, still more than four hundred feet above the level of the sea. The fountain was limpid and sparkling, but warm. The thermometer stood in it at 81° Fahr. Kept in vessels over night, it was delightfully cool and refreshing, though strongly impregnated with lime. The stream rushes down the steep descent of the mountain below, and its course is hidden by a luxuriant thicket of trees and shrubs, belonging to a more southern clime. The whole of the descent from the fountain to the shore was apparently once terraced for tillage and gardens, and on the right near the foot are the ruins of a town. From the base of the declivity, a fine rich plain slopes off very gradually, nearly half a mile to the shore. The brook runs across it directly to the sea; though in May, when visited by Dr. Robinson, its waters were absorbed by the thirsty earth long before

reaching the shore. So far as the water extended, the plain was covered with gardens, chiefly of cucumbers, belonging to the Ras-haideh Arabs.

Among the trees below the fountain, making part of the thicket along the stream, are the seyâl, producing gum-arabic, the semr, and the thorny nûbk of Egypt, bearing a small acid fruit, like a thorn-apple; the 'osher, which has been already described; and a large tree, with long beautiful clusters of whitish blossoms, probably the el-henna of the Arabs; the camphire of the English Bible, for which the spot was anciently celebrated.* Not a palm tree now exists there, though the place seems anciently to have been famous for them.

The more ancient Hebrew name of this place was Hazon-tamar. As such it is first mentioned before the destruction of Sodom, as being inhabited by Amorites, and near to the cities of the plain. Under the name En-gedi, or Fountain of the Kid, it occurs as a city of Judah in the desert, and is associated, we have seen, with the adventures of David. At a later period, bands of the Moabites and Ammonites came up against king Jehoshaphat, apparently around the south end of the Dead Sea, as far as to En-gedi; by the very same route, it would seem, which is taken by the Arabs in their marauding expeditions at the present day, along the shore to 'Ain Jidy, and then up the pass,

* "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi," Song of Solomon i. 14.

and so northwards below Tekoa. From En-gedi towards Jerusalem, there was, in the time of Josephus, an ascent "by the cliff Ziz," which seems to have been none other than the present pass.*

From 'Ain Jidy, we proceed southward some twelve or fifteen miles to a high pyramidal cliff, rising precipitously from the sea, and bearing the name of Sebbeh. The truncated summit of a lofty isolated rock forms a small plain, apparently inaccessible. Some of lieutenant Lynch's companions clambered up the steep and rugged cliff, sometimes upon their hands and knees, and found the whole summit surrounded by the remains of a wall, built on the brink of the precipice, and the entire area covered with the ruins of large and splendid buildings, palaces, and prisons. Sebbeh can be no other than the site of the ancient and renowned fortress of Masada, first built by Jonathan Macca-bæus, and afterwards strengthened and rendered, as it was thought, impregnable by Herod the Great, as a place of refuge for himself. Josephus describes it as situated on a lofty rock, of considerable circuit, overhanging the Dead Sea, surrounded by profound valleys, unfathomable to the eye; it was inaccessible to the foot of animals on every part, except by two paths hewn in the rock. The summit was a plain, surrounded by a wall, seven furlongs in circuit.

* The first account of this place, from personal observation, which has been given to the public for many centuries, is that of Dr. Robinson, vol. ii. 208—216.

Besides the fortifications, and immense cisterns hewn in the rock, for a full supply of water, Herod built here a palace, with columns, and porticoes, and baths, and sumptuous apartments, situated on the west and north of the plain. The interior part of the area was left free of buildings, and was cultivated, in order to guard against famine.

Not long before the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the *Sicarii*, or assassins, so notorious in the later Jewish history, had got possession of the fortress and its treasures by stratagem, and laid contribution upon the country far and near. The Romans besieged them, and the outline of the works which they erected around Masada, as seen from the heights above, is as complete now as if they had been but recently abandoned. The crumbled wall, making the entire circuit of the place, and bringing the siege before the beholder with an air of reality, affords a stupendous illustration of that indomitable perseverance, which enabled the Romans to subdue the world, and, in this instance, which led them to sit down deliberately in such a desert, and commence a siege with such a work, and scale such a fortress. "We found among the rocks below," says an American missionary, "a round stone, which had probably been hurled from a catapult. We launched, by way of diversion, some of the large stones from the original wall (on the summit) towards the Dead Sea, none of which reached the Roman lines, half a mile or more distant, though

some of them stopped not far distant, making the most stupendous bounds."

The capture of Masada was the crowning achievement of the Roman legions in Palestine. The resistance to the troops of Flavius Silva was desperate and protracted. But, at the close of a day's assault, which had made it apparent that the place would be carried by storm on the next, Eleazar, the commander of the Sicarii, made an impassioned appeal to his men, urging them to save themselves from the power of the Romans by self-sacrifice. The suggestion was adopted with all the ardour of madness, and every man slew his own wife and children. Then ten men were selected to be the executioners of the rest, and having finished their terrible work, cast lots for one of their number to perform the same office for the remainder; and he, last of all, fell by his own sword. Nine hundred and sixty individuals were thus slaughtered. Two women and five children, who had secreted themselves, alone survived to tell the tale. And the Romans were more affected by the horrid spectacle which the solitude and silence of the morning presented before their eyes, than they would have been by the fiercest living resistance. This was the last act of the great Jewish tragedy, which fulfilled our Lord's prediction, and was in very deed such tribulation as had not been from the beginning of the world.

Passing by the salt mountain, and the plain which bounds the southern extremity of the

sea, (of both of which we have already spoken,) we proceed to notice the Wady Kerak in the eastern mountains. Here we have already found and examined the probable site of the ancient Zoar. An inland journey to Kerak, the ancient Kir Moab, will amply repay the trouble. Along the various windings of the way, lieutenant Lynch states, that the scenery is wild and grand. "On one side," he says, "was a deep and yawning chasm, which made the head dizzy to look into; on the other, beetling crags, blackened by the tempests of ages, in shape exactly resembling the waves of a mighty ocean, which, at the moment of over-leaping some lofty barrier, were suddenly changed to stone, retaining even in transformation their dark and angry hue. In most places, the naked rock dipped down abruptly into the deep and gloomy chasm, and it only required a torrent to come tumbling headlong over the rude fragments fallen from the cliffs above, to complete the sublimity of the scene. Nor was it wanting."

A storm, with floods of rain, would be refreshing after so much journeying in this dry and weary land—a land in which the traveller soon learns to feel the force of the Scriptural figures, "the shadow of a great rock," and "the shadow of a cloud," and in which the claim of water to be regarded as the symbol of the best of blessings is immediately acknowledged.

"When we first started [from the shore of

the Dead Sea,] it was so cloudy, that we congratulated ourselves upon the prospect of a cool and pleasant, instead of a sultry ride. While passing under the ruin [of Zoar,] it began to rain lightly, but steadily. Before we had half ascended the pass, however, there came a shout of thunder from the dense cloud, which had gathered at the summit of the gorge, followed by a rain, compared to which the gentle showers of our more favoured clime are as dew drops to the overflowing cistern. Except the slight shower at the Pilgrim's Ford, this was the first since we landed in Syria. The black and threatening cloud soon enveloped the mountain tops, the lightnings playing across it in incessant flashes, while the loud thunder reverberated from side to side of the appalling chasm. Between the peals we soon heard a roaring and continuous sound. It was the torrent from the rain cloud, sweeping in a long line of foam down the steep declivity, bearing along huge fragments of rocks, which, striking against each other, sounded like mimic thunder. In one spot, where the torrent made its maddest leap, a single palm tree, bent by the blast, waved its branches wildly above the gorge, seeming to the imagination like the genius of the place, bewailing the devastation of its favourite haunt. During the whole of this storm, our rugged path led along the face of a steep precipice, looking into the dark grandeur of the chasm beneath. It was a wild, a terrific, but a glorious sight! And I

rejoiced to witness this elemental strife, amid these lofty mountains. . . . I have clambered the cone of Vesuvius by nightfall, and looked over its brink into the fiery caldron beneath ; and in a thunder-storm I once launched a boat at the foot of Niagara, and, rocking in the foam of its cataract, marked with delight the myriads of gems, of every hue and radiance, reflected in the misty vapour at each succeeding flash ; but I never beheld a scene in sublimity equal to the present one."

The storm gradually subsided. The cloud gathered its misty folds, and was swept by degrees over the crest towards the desert of Arabia. The old limestone rocks on the eastern, as on the western side of the sea, are worn into caverns, arches, and the resemblance of houses. One of them may be the cave in which Lot dwelt. Some hours' travelling attains a height of three thousand feet above the Dead Sea, and a different climate, where a high rolling plain stretches out, the grass withered and the grain blighted, at this season, by the sirocco and the locust. The "strength of Moab,"* though some of its walls are still standing, is now only a collection of stone huts, built without mortar, from seven to eight feet high. The population consists of three hundred families, three-fourths of them being nominal Christians, who purchase peace with the

* Kir-Moab means the stronghold or citadel of Moab. In Isaiah xv. 1, the Chaldee paraphrase has put *Kerraka Moab*, "Castle of Moab;" and the former of these words, pronounced in Arabic Karak, Kerek, or Krak, is the name it still bears.

powerful tribe of Kerakîyeh by an annual tribute, and submitting to occasional exactions. Their church is a low, dark, vaulted room, containing a picture of St. George fighting the Dragon, two half columns of red granite from the ruins of the castle, and a well of cool water in the centre. Lynch found them endeavouring to erect a new one.

Ten miles due north is the site of Ar, or Rabbah, the capital of Moab, the ruins of which are situated on a low hill, which commands the whole plain. Two old Roman temples, and some tanks, are the only remains of antiquity. Ten miles further, and the banks of the Arnon are reached ; this was the ancient boundary between the land of Moab and the Trans-Jordanic Palestine.* It rises in the mountains of Gilead, whence it pursues a circuitous course of eighty miles to the Dead Sea. Its bed is rocky, and, in many parts, so deep and precipitous as to appear inaccessible. It was to "a city in the border of Arnon," the "utmost coast" of his kingdom, that Balak went to meet Balaam ; and in that neighbourhood were the folly and iniquity of divination demonstrated. "God is not a man, that he should lie ; neither the son of man, that he should repent : hath he said, and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not bring it to pass ?" The region in which we now are is one great monument to the truth of the sublime

* "From the river of Arnon unto Mount Hermon," Deut. iii. 8.

words, which flowed so strangely from the reluctant lips of the wicked prophet.

Turning to the coast, fifteen miles distant, at the mouth of the Arnon, is one of the most romantic spots in this romantic land. The artist's pencil can alone portray it. The stream, eighty-two feet wide and four deep, runs through a chasm, formed by high perpendicular cliffs of red, brown, and yellow sandstone, mixed red and yellow on the southern side, and on the north a soft rich red, all worn by the winter rains into the most fantastic forms, not unlike Egyptian architecture.

A sail of ten or twelve miles along the shore, northward, brings us to the mouth of the wady Zerka Main, which derives the latter name from Mai'n, the site of the ancient Baal-Meon, which is found in the interior. In this wady was the fortress of Machærus, rebuilt by Herod, most probably the prison in which John the Baptist was confined, and the scene of those unholy festivities, in the midst of which he was condemned to die. This was a favourite residence of Herod, chosen for the luxury of the baths formed by the hot springs of Callirhoe. The site of Machærus is doubtful, but the hot springs remain. "Looking down into the Valley of Callirhoe, (according to Irby and Mangles,) it presents some grand and romantic features. The rocks vary between red, grey, and black, and have a bold and imposing appearance. The whole bottom is filled, and, in a manner, choked up with a crowded thicket

of canes and aspines, of different species, intermixed with the palm, which is also seen rising in tufts in the recesses of the mountain's side, and in every place whence the springs issue. In one place, a considerable stream of water is seen precipitating itself from a high and perpendicular shelf of rock, which is strongly tinted with the brilliant yellow of sulphur deposited upon it. On reaching the bottom, we found ourselves at what may be termed a hot river, so copious and rapid is it, and its heat so little abated. For some way, the temperature is kept up by the constant supplies of water of the same temperature which flow into the river. In order to visit these sources in succession, we crossed over to the right bank, and, ascending by the mountain side, we passed four abundant springs, all within the distance of half a mile, discharging themselves into the stream at right angles with its course. We judged the distance from the Dead Sea by the ravine, to be about one hour and a half. The whole surface of the shelf, where the springs are, is strewed over with tiles and broken pottery; and, what is most surprising, within a very few minutes, without any particular search, four ancient copper medals were found by our party. All were too much defaced to be distinguishable, but they appeared to be Roman. Our Arab guard here took a vapour bath, according to the practice of the country. A bed of twigs and broom was laid across a crevice, whence one of the springs issued, at

the height of a foot or two from the water. On this he laid himself, wrapped in his abba, and only remained a few minutes. The effect of the steam upon him was soon very evident. We observed another of these sweating beds a little further down. We had no thermometer, but the degree of heat in the water seemed very great. Near the source, it scalds the hand, which cannot be kept in it for half a minute. The deposit of sulphur is very great, but the water is tasteless to the palate."

One point of interest in the environs of the Dead Sea yet remains, but no traveller has yet discovered it. The sepulchre of Moses was hidden from his contemporaries and their descendants, no doubt to prevent the abuses to which superstition would have converted it; and Mount Nebo, from which he was permitted, before his decease, to gaze on the land of promise, is now unknown. "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho," Deut. xxxii. 49. "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho," Deut. xxxiv. 1. Abarim was probably the name of that part of the general range of the eastern mountains which intervened between the mountains of Gilead on the north, and the mountains of Seir on the south, and it might thus comprehend a portion, if not the whole of the mountains of Moab. Nebo seems to have been a mountain in the range

of Abarim, and Pisgah was, perhaps, the most elevated and commanding peak in that mountain. Mount Nebo is usually identified with Mount Attarus, which is the most elevated mountain in that neighbourhood, and whose summit is distinguished by a large pistachio tree, overshadowing a heap of stones. But Mount Attarus is far from being over against Jericho, being south of the wady Zerka Main, and ten or twelve miles from the northern extremity of the sea. The highest point in all the eastern mountains is Jebel el-Jil'âd, or Es-Salt, near the city of that name, but this again is much too far north to be Mount Nebo. Dr. Robinson, a most learned and accurate explorer, while on the coast of the Dead Sea, on the Jordan, and in or near the plains of Jericho, was much interested in looking out among the eastern mountains for some hill "over against Jericho," standing so out from the rest, and so marked, as to be recognised as the Nebo of the Scriptures. But his search was in vain. All we know is, that Moses went up from the plains of Moab to some high part of the adjacent mountains, from which he had everywhere an extensive view over the Jordan Valley, and the mountainous tract of Judah and Ephraim towards the western sea.

The prophetic curse has fallen on these lands. Their cities, even their defenced cities, are waste without inhabitant, and their habitations forsaken and left like a wilderness. Joy and gladness have forsaken their old abodes, and

the plentiful field bringeth forth briers and thorns. The mountains of Judah are covered with ruins ; and the opposite shores of Ammon and Moab are equally desolate. Of all the Holy Land it may be said, that the anger of the Lord has been kindled against it, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in "the book." "The highways lie waste, the way-faring man ceaseth : he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth ; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down ; Sharon is like a wilderness ; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits." "Destruction upon destruction is cried : for the whole land is spoiled." Rabbah of the Ammonites is "a stable for camels, and a couching place for flocks ;" and the Ammonites are "not remembered among the nations," their race is extinct, and no one bears their name. Against Moab, it was said, "Woe unto Nebo ! for it is spoiled : Kiriathaim is confounded and taken ; Misgab is confounded and dismayed. There shall be no more praise of Moab. . . . And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape : the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed. . . . Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander. How is the strong staff broken and the beautiful rod ! . . . Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord." Not one

of these words has failed of its accomplishment. The land is utterly desolate. In the map of the unbeliever Volney's travels, the place of the cities of Moab is characterized by "the ruins of towns."

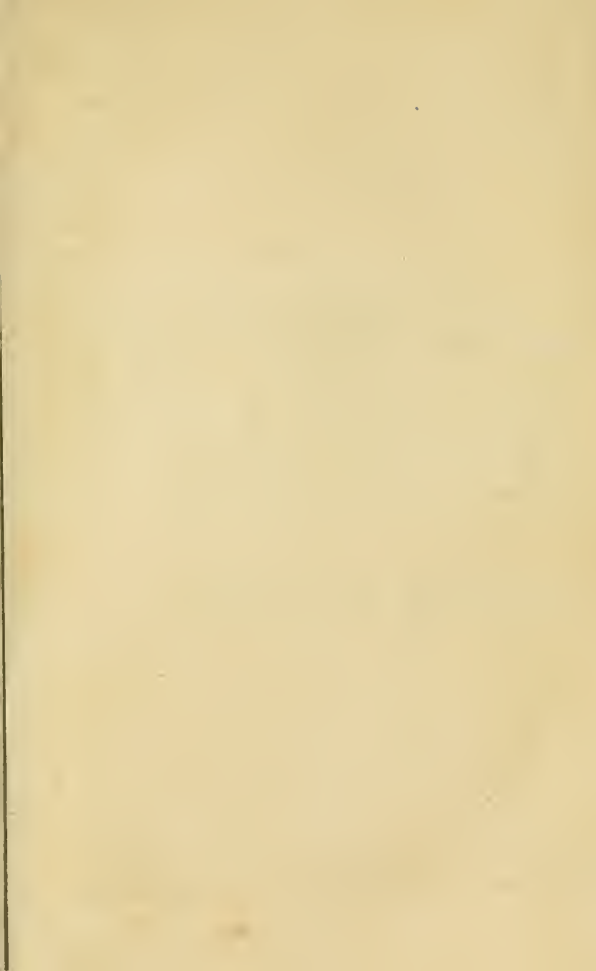
But the interest of these lands in the future is not all darkness. Of the "wanderers," who now possess their waste places, it has been said that fifty well-armed Franks, with a large sum of money, could revolutionize the whole country. Our happy faith is, that the country is destined to undergo a revolution, which gold and power cannot effect. All difficult questions connected with the interpretation of prophecy apart, there is reason to believe that both Judah and Ishmael shall yet live before God. The impression is wide-spread over the mountains of Judah and Moab, that ever since the country was in the hands of the Franks, their descendants possess deeds of all the lands, and that the object of travellers is to look after their estates; the European or American, who surveys the region around him with his telescope in his hand, and records his observations with his pen, is supposed to be marking the bounds of his own property; and the idea of a great change is pleasing to the oppressed native tribes. The government of European Christians they are prepared to hail, notwithstanding their prejudices, as freedom from the yoke of Moslem misrule.

May we not regard these dreams and desires as a foreshadowing of a higher deliverance, for

which the land now offers no prayers? Faith anticipates a glorious future. The ends of the earth have been given to Christ by an irreversible decree. Men may speculate and doubt, and even saints despond, but one day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The winter may be long, but the seed will not die; the night may be dark, but the sun will not forget his rising. The King of Zion abideth his own time; and when it is come, he will go forth in majesty, gentle and mighty. He will not fail to find instruments, or to create them. The proud hall, the abode of power, of chivalry, and of crime; the dark cell, where the soul of the monk is chafed by the chains of his own superstition; the palace and the shepherd's cot; the tent of the herdsman and the camp of the soldier; anywhere or everywhere, will he find instruments or create them. And thence will he send them forth, and fill the earth with the evidences of his living power, and the fruits of his unbounded love, in souls created anew, and led to trust in him, whom to know is life eternal. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." And "the dwellers in the vales and on the rocks"

of Palestine shall not be last in the general blessedness. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid."

"Oh scenes surpassing fable, and yet true;
Scenes of accomplished bliss! which, who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy?"





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The Jordan and the Dead Sea

